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Notes on the Cultural Front

By Michael Gold

THIS YEAR I crossed the continent in an automobile. I talked to California longshoremen and fruit-pickers, to Wyoming oil workers and Pennsylvania miners, to waiters, gas-station attendants, and little shopkeepers.

Roosevelt is their symbol of the new, and the C.I.O. stirs them as Columbus and his subjective geography must have affected the Spanish court. The spirit is: we don't know exactly where we're going, but we must be on our way. When the people sleep, it is as if the sun were not shining; pessimism and cynicism darken the mind. But now this American people is in motion, as never since the Civil War. It is possible to breathe again. Destiny and hope hover over the great continent.

NEW YORK, too, had felt the spirit that walks America. Renewing old friendships here in the unions of the garment workers, the food workers, the waterfront workers, and those of other trades, I found a remarkable change. The whole struggle has debouched on a new and higher plane. Communist trade unionists, a few years ago still affected by the sectarianism of any unpopular minority, have learned the difficult art of the united front. Now they think and act like labor statesmen, instead of isolated soap-boxers. They have acquired a sense of power and responsibility, and a deep-rooted importance in the very heart of the class-strategy. The recent New York elections, in which the Labor Party emerged as a national force, and in which the Communist Party first made itself felt as an effective political group, demonstrated this great change abundantly. Yes, the nation is on the march.

It is true that fascism has become bolder all over the world. It is on the offensive, as all gamblers down to their last chips must be. The democracies seem weak and divided. An international class war is in the making, and the Fifth Columns are busily preparing it in every nation, betraying their own people in the process.

Gulliver can always sweep off the feverish midgets of fascist capitalism by merely stirring his limbs in one mighty coördinated gesture.

The people's front is Gulliver's first sortie. Experimental and clumsy, it has already checked fascism in Spain and France and put a spine into the Chinese resistance to fascism. England has been the weakest link in the chain of democracies, but a people's front is slowly emerging there too, against all the sabotage of the sordid labor tories.

And now, by some powerful working of the instinct of self-preservation, we behold the American masses groping their own way toward a people's front—for if these C.I.O. and labor-party movements mean anything in the international scene, it is just that.

So is it not a great hour in American history, a time for confidence, for optimism and heightened action, a time to sink all petty partisan quarrels into a vast united effort? It seems so to millions of Americans; this is the mood of the country, I believe. In New York, however, it appears there is also a group of mourners. They think the country is going to hell, and it is all the fault of the emerging people's front. No, I am not talking about the Wall Street section of Franco's international; I am referring to the Trotskyfied intellectuals.

THEY ARE a small band, working in a small milieu, but what energy, what remarkable ingenuity and persistence they display! Some of them called themselves Communists two or three years ago; but they were rather faint-hearted then, passive fellow-travelers with little passion. Now they overflow with enthusiasm against the people's front, against the Communist Party, against the Soviet Union, against loyalist Spain, and China, and proletarian literature, the labor party, the C.I.O., virtually the whole of Gulliver, the awakening people.

They fill the intellectual and literary journals of the bourgeoisie with their hymns of hate. A few years ago they seriously questioned whether the creative writer would not be injured if he entered the political arena and allowed the working class to lay demands on him. This was when they were "Communists"; now, when they are Trotskyites, they are intensely political, and cannot write a line of poetry or a short fiction sketch without allowing their political feelings to overcome them, and to distort their talents.

It is all strange, until one regards it also as a psycho-

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logical, as well as a political, phenomenon. In most people, love and solidarity are the passions that drive them to action; in others, the malice and hate of warped personality can be as strong a motivating force. Shakespeare knew this, and his Iago, a genius of malice, is certainly shrewder, more active and inspired than the noble Othello.

Intellectuals are peculiarly susceptible to Trotskyism, a nay-saying trend. The intellectual under capitalism is not a full man, since capitalism has little use for a culture that brings no immediate dollar-profit. The "intellectual" is rather a stepchild at the capitalist feast. The great and small fiction of the western intellectuals during the latter part of the nineteenth century and up to the present is permeated with the bitter poison of frustration, and the malice and pessimism that accompany frustration. Suspicion of life reached a point among the western intellectuals where, as Nietzsche pointed out, it became a form of biological inferiority.

This suspicion of life, so organic with the intellectuals, has made them the peculiar prey of Trotskyism, which at present denies the whole current movement of the people's history.

Trotskyism has no mass following. It finds its only strength in this isolated world of those intellectuals who, with the frustrate, negative psychology capitalism has implanted in them, were never really at home in the Communist working-class movement. The workers, however oppressed under capitalism, still knew themselves vital to the functioning of capitalism. Every strike was a demonstration of this. If they did not work, the wheels of society would stop. But intellectuals never knew this class feeling of being functionally important enough to be dangerous.

So those intellectuals, who had numberless reservations when they were fellow-travelers in "communism," now have no reservations in Trotskyism. Trotskyism is merely an extension of their previous distrust of the positive working-class philosophy and reaction to life. Now they are at home again with Iago.

We can, therefore, discard all the new "Marxist" jargon these people have learned in the past five years and pierce to the spiritual and psychological core of their new-found energy. It is the simple malice of the Joyceian intellectual, hating life. Iago has found a new mask to assume in a new situation.

I CAN REMEMBER these same people only a decade ago. It was Christmas Eve in the harem, and all the eunuchs were there. Santa Claus asked them what they wanted in their stockings, and they shouted—but you know the answer.

The ivory tower, once a hermit's refuge and revolt against a vulgar, commercialized world, had become vulgarized into a bedroom. The eunuchs pranced and frisked merrily; sex, sex, sex (God knows some of them needed it badly) was the chief preoccupation of these intellectuals; the Coolidge boom was on; and James Branch Cabell, an aristocratic panderer from Virginia, told them "naughty" stories. He was their chief "artist," as Mencken was their "critic," for ten futile years!

Bah! It was a sordid and contemptible time, and I want to spit whenever I think of it. In that period of the triumphant *nouveaux riches,* when even stockbrokers went in for literature, because literature meant "feelthy peectures," only a handful of us remained loyal to the old-fashioned doctrine that literature was more than an aphrodisiac or entertainment.

We were isolated; and perhaps we ranted a little, and sneered, and made mistakes. We must have seemed as one-ideaed as hairy Jeremiahs to those fat revelers at the Coolidge banquet into whose ears we yelled: "Your prosperity is a fraud! You have forgotten the American people! Your literature is no more representative of American life than a French *capote!* To hell with you fakers, wait till your stock market crashes!"

Yes, I was one of the Jeremiahs, and I remember that once that most unfortunate and charming man of talent, Clarence Day, said to me from his "mattress-grave," "You fellows must be awfully lonesome." I answered, "It would be a lot more lonesome among the liars."

I have no apologies to offer snooty young "proletarian" critics who, like Dr. Dryasdust, read the past without imagination and tell us now our manners were bad, and our æsthetics faulty. They didn't happen to be there. They are living in a time when proletarian literature has become important enough for Thomas Lamont's *Saturday Review of Literature* to "demolish" week after week.

Then we were not noticed at all—we were jokes and freaks. If I hadn't read Marx and Lenin, and learned some economics, and learned to trust the people, I might have felt like a freak, perhaps. But I knew enough to know that the fashions of intellectuals are only froth on a mighty wave, and that the real ocean of reality is where the people earn their daily bread.

Well, the stock market did crash, and the "literary" criticism of the "political" Jeremiahs in literature proved correct; the ensuing depression swept away all the gilded, phrase-mongering, bedroom heroics of the Menckens and the Cabells, all that seasonal fashion.

The market quotations went down, and proletarian literature went up. Unemployment brought thousands of intellectuals into our ranks. Overnight, almost like Byron, the concept of "proletarian literature" became famous. Even the dizziest Cabellists stopped contemplating their you-know-what, and turned their eyes outward, on the class struggle. Hunger came through the door, and Eros scrammed through the window. It was a real "boom."

But some of the old guard, like Mencken, austerely unmoved by the cry of twenty million jobless Americans, cast a fishy gaze on this novel sight. "This is just a new bandwagon," Mencken sneered in the *Saturday Review,* "a new seasonal fashion among the intellectuals."

The stern old Baltimore Babbitt was partly right. A swarm of piffling paste-pots, dilettantes, cynics, frustrates, and bourgeois Iagos were among us. For a time they threatened to swamp even us with their alien ideology, their bourgeois zeal to distort Marx and to direct the working class. But in the end, they could not "adapt"; they were only Menckens at heart, after all; old Father Babbitt had shrewdly estimated his own children.

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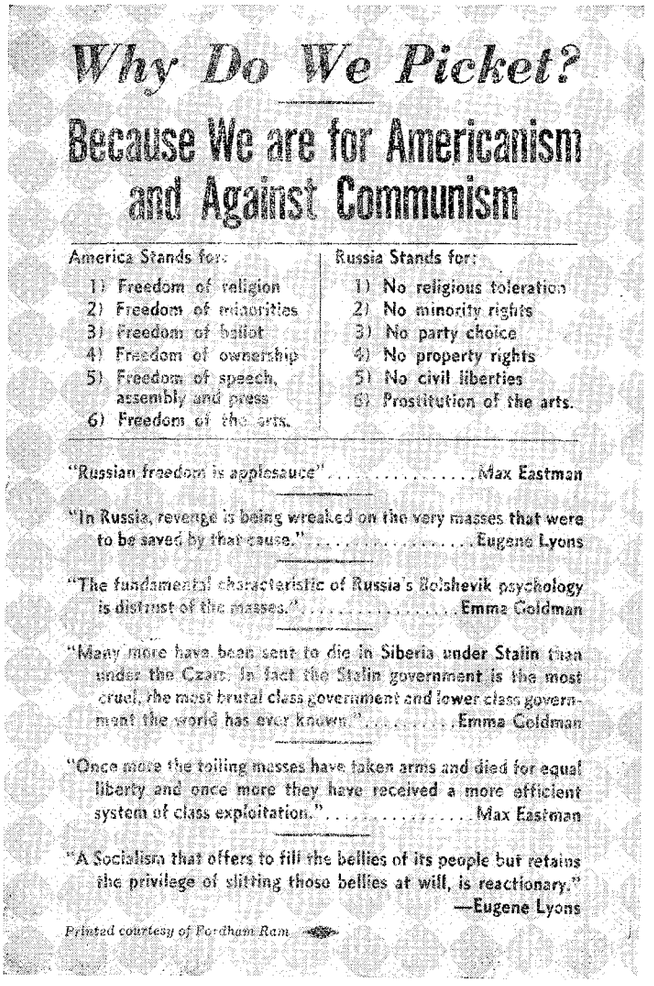
Then, the class struggle sharpened. At the first critical moment, a large group of the "converts" began deserting the proletarian "bandwagon" in a scramble back to their native own. I must confess I was never alarmed. I believe evacuation of the bowels is necessary to a healthy body. This is a purge of unhealthy stuff without any effort on our part.

Yes, they had their fling at "revolution," and they hated it. But they learned something in the process; how to fight with new and more skilled weapons the Communism they had previously feared and distrusted. Now in the name of Marx himself they fight the Marxists; in the name of the revolution, they sabotage the revolution; in the name of the people, they try to confuse, slander, and destroy the people's front. They call themselves "Communists," and the chief enemy they seek to destroy in every land is the Communist Party.

THE PROCESS is becoming clearer every day on the political front. Here is a little incident, one of many:

The other day I attended a Communist mass meeting at Madison Square Garden to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the Russian revolution.

In the rain, on all the streets around the great hall, groups of earnest young men paraded with signs. They were Catholic students from nearby seminaries and colleges. Their fascist elders had sent them forth to battle for God and the Liberty League. Their signs pleaded with New Yorkers to boycott the Communist meeting. They handed out various leaflets. The one reproduced on this page is typical.



Why Do We Picket?

Because We are for Americanism and Against Communism

America Stands for:	Russia Stands for:
1) Freedom of religion	1) No religious toleration
2) Freedom of minorities	2) No minority rights
3) Freedom of ballot	3) No party choice
4) Freedom of ownership	4) No property rights
5) Freedom of speech, assembly and press	5) No civil liberties
6) Freedom of the arts.	6) Prostitution of the arts.

"Russian freedom is applesauce" ..... Max Eastman

"In Russia, revenge is being wreaked on the very masses that were to be saved by that cause." ..... Eugene Lyons

"The fundamental characteristic of Russia's Bolshevik psychology is distrust of the masses." ..... Emma Goldman

"Many more have been sent to die in Siberia under Stalin than under the Czars. In fact the Stalin government is the most cruel, the most brutal class government and lower class government the world has ever known." ..... Emma Goldman

"Once more the toiling masses have taken arms and died for equal liberty and once more they have received a more efficient system of class exploitation." ..... Max Eastman

"A Socialism that offers to fill the bellies of its people but retains the privilege of slitting those bellies at will, is reactionary."
—Eugene Lyons

Printed courtesy of Fordham Ram

A Catholic anti-communist leaflet cites as its authorities three self-confessed "revolutionists."

There it is in a nutshell. Franco's chief supporters in New York employ Max Eastman, Eugene Lyons, and Emma Goldman as their final argument against the first workers' state. This has become the function of Trotskyism in the present period. Even when an honest man falls into this peculiar camp, innocent, perhaps, and pure in heart as those young Catholic students, he cannot avoid finishing in the camp of the enemy. The Madison Square incident is being repeated a hundred times every day in every land, including Spain; but the Trotskyites see no shame in being used in this manner. They even go on calling themselves "Communists," for it is as "disillusioned Communists" that they are chiefly valuable to the capitalist press.

The whole Dostoyevskian story of the degeneration of these people was told by themselves in the Moscow trials. In America, these trials have been slandered as frame-ups, as if there were no Soviet justice. But the Bolsheviks educated an illiterate nation, and lifted one-sixth of the world out of ancient poverty and superstition into a new historic stage of evolution. The Soviet system is indivisible, and if Soviet nurseries, libraries, and schools are a sound development, Soviet justice must be as sound, for it comes from the same source as the Soviet cultural renaissance.

The Moscow trials are horrible, but they are horrible only because they reveal the malicious depths of the Iago-Trotskyist soul.

ON THE CULTURAL FRONT in America, the Trotskyites are being used by the bourgeois press in the same manner; as "disillusioned" intellectual witnesses to the alleged narrowness and decay of proletarian culture.

The *Saturday Review of Literature,* which, as you know, is subsidized by Thomas Lamont, has been conducting a veritable campaign against our literature. The *Nation,* as Granville Hicks shows in a documented study in this issue, has been second in the campaign, and from time to time *Scribner's, Harper's,* and the slick-paper magazines for the middle class join the refined Red-hunt.

The renegade Trotskyites supply them with their ammunition. When did these magazines ever print an essay by any intellectual who takes a positive position toward the Soviet Union or proletarian culture, even when the intellectual is more distinguished in achievement than a Eugene Lyons or a V. F. Calverton; Romain Rolland, perhaps, or Maxim Gorky. This is obviously not a non-partisan search for truth, but a war on the "Reds."

Why do these magazines need to conduct such a campaign? That, too, is obvious. The depression drove thousands of the American middle class into the left camp, and it has become necessary to bring them back. But tory authors would not be believed; only Trotskyist authors, renegades who have learned the left phraseology, are effective. In Chicago, the head of the Red Squad is a Russian Jew who was once a 1905 revolu-

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tionist. He has built his police career on his special knowledge of how the revolutionary movement functions. In our American literary world, similar careers are being made by a group of Trotskyist authors. It is significant that few of them were ever published as freely, or reviewed as cordially, when they wrote on the working-class side. Have they taken such a sudden leap forward in the technique of their art or the clarity of their thought?

Of course not. It is a Red-hunt that is going on, a political battle, and they are valuable to the enemies of communism.

I HAD INTENDED to write some sort of essay that would try to answer all the recent criticisms they have been bringing, and inspiring in others, against proletarian literature. To prepare myself, I read through some of the renegade essays and found that they weren't literary criticism at all, and that it was impossible to answer them except in political terms.

Their arguments always boil down to one basic slander: *viz.*, proletarian literature is dead in America, and it was murdered by the Communist Party which practiced a rigid political dictatorship on it.

The Catholic-fascist circular said: "Russia stands for prostitution of the arts." They learned this from Max Eastman, no doubt, a man who did not scruple to call Maxim Gorky a prostitute and an "artist in uniform." But Eastman's stale thesis has been made the foundation of the whole Trotskyist "line" on proletarian literature in America, I have found.

They have spread this legend of party dictatorship far and wide among the intellectuals. And how can one answer a vague myth? The liars cannot cite a single example of party dictation over literature, or a single extract from the writings of a Communist critic advocating such dictatorship. They have no facts, only a common myth of slander.

In several notable speeches at writers' congresses, Earl Browder, secretary of the Communist Party, made it sufficiently plain that the party policy on literature was one of complete freedom.

> There is no fixed "party line" by which works of art can be separated automatically into sheep and goats [said Browder in 1935]. Our work in this field cannot be one of party resolutions giving judgment upon æsthetic questions.
>
> Within the camp of the working class, in struggle against the camp of capitalism, we find our best atmosphere in the free give-and-take of a writers' and critics' democracy, which is controlled only by its audience, the masses of its readers, who constitute the final authority.
>
> We believe that fine literature must arise directly out of life, expressing not only its problems, but, at the same time, all the richness and complexity of detail of life itself. The party wants to help, as we believe it already has to a considerable degree, to bring to writers a great new wealth of material, to open up new worlds to them. Our party interests are not narrow; they are broad enough to encompass the interests of all toiling humanity. We want literature to be as broad.

Is this the edict of a dictator? Is this the language of "politicians" who would "control" literature?

For a few years, accompanying the fiercest moments of the depression, there was a wave of proletarian literature in this country. Its authors were close to the Communist Party. They found nothing in the Communist Party that hampered their expression, or how were all those novels and poems ever produced?

True, some of the works had a narrowness of theme and some lack of imagination in style. Some were too heavily weighted with the slogans of politics. Might not this have been the fault of the authors, immature experimenters in a new field, rather than the fault of the bogyman, Stalin?

But a galaxy of fine books came out of the movement, along with the lesser work. American literature is permanently richer, I believe, for the advent of such poets and spokesmen of new areas of American life as Jack Conroy, Grace Lumpkin, Fielding Burke, Leane Zugsmith, Erskine Caldwell, Clifford Odets, Albert Maltz, William Rollins, John L. Spivak, Alfred Hayes, Kenneth Fearing, Edwin Rolfe, Isidor Schneider, Langston Hughes, Edwin Seaver, and many others who managed to retain their individual souls under the so-called "dictatorship."

But now the political situation has altered. Stark misery and brutal oppression of the workers marked the period then; now the working class has climbed to a higher stage, and is fighting not only for bread, but for political power. This has been a sudden and revolutionary change, of the sort that can happen only in great historic periods such as ours. The American proletarian writers haven't quite caught up with it; literature needs time to mellow and digest the daily fact. Our American writers, I believe, are experiencing a little of the problem faced by the Russian writers who had to pass from the Civil War into the construction period.

It isn't easy. And it will take a deeper study of working-class life than was demanded in the more primitive period, just as the people's front demands of Communists more integrity and wisdom than ever before. The class struggle is more complex than it was five years ago. This means that a richer and more complex approach will be demanded in our proletarian literature.

So there is a lull, perhaps, while the authors prepare themselves for the new tasks. Meanwhile what has been accomplished is that the work of the proletarian pioneers has already become an influence on the whole national literature. When Hollywood presents plays like *Dead End,* it is unconsciously acknowledging the national victory of literary ideas whose champions ten years ago could be found only in the pages of the MASSES.

But proletarian literature is dead, say the renegades. It was killed by the Communist Party dictators. If it is dead, why fear it so much? Why do they write so many obituaries, why are the bourgeois journals so eager to print over and over those slanderous stale epitaphs?

I SAY AGAIN that we have ended one period and are about to enter another in proletarian literature.

What Mencken did not know, and could never know, is that the bandwagon rush brought us good as well as evil. Thousands and thousands of white-collar workers and professionals were permanently proletarianized

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during the worst years of the depression. They will never be the same again. They cannot desert, like the Trotskyist renegades, because they have all their roots in some organization, and in the trade-union movement. These masses of members in the Newspaper Guild, the Lawyers' Guild, and the trade unions of the social workers, architects, and technicians, the teachers, actors, and musicians, authors, and the rest, are new species of "intellectuals." They are dwelling in no ivory tower, but in the real world, where ideas must mirror objective truth.

They are serious, constructive, skilled people, who have learned to think and work in groups. No longer susceptible to the Freudian, bohemian, and phrase-mongering egotism of the previous generation, they aren't Hamlets, or Iagos, or Napoleons—but practical trade unionists. Deep in the American people, their approach to the labor problem is surer and more intimate than that of the preceding generation of white-collars.

Renegades, Red-baiters, Trotskyites, who daily bury the Soviet Union, Spain, China, the people's front, proletarian literature, and what have you in the bourgeois press, have never made any dent on this new generation. These people have had to fight against Red-baiting. The bosses have invariably used it against their own unions. They have been on picket-lines and in jails; they have had to do the things workers do, and make the same mistakes. Nobody can fool them about the realities.

Out of them, I believe, will come a new wave of proletarian literature, different and more complex than the last, more at home in the working-class world. For every white-collar renegade, there are thousands of these "new people." In the factories, mines, and mills are thousands of other lads whose whole outlook is being shaped by the C.I.O. The future of proletarian literature is in these hands. Labor is on the march. The farmers, professionals, small businessmen are stirring. Several thousand young American Communists and liberals are fighting in Spain. A labor party is being born. The American people are in motion.

Who can doubt that all this new historic experience and collective aspiration will not be expressed in our literature, so that the Communist Party, which plays a great role in this political ferment, will not also inspire with clarity and courage the new generation of writers, as it did the preceding one? Where else can such writers go for a philosophic key to the turmoil they are in? Can they go to the nihilists and saboteurs who deny that anything new has happened, or that the people are awakening? Proletarian literature carved a road despite the Menckens and Cabells and Max Eastmans of yesterday. It will go on widening that road despite the new crop of ivory-tower Iagos, Communist-haters, and nay-sayers to life.

Back to Work

By Leane Zugsmith

BREAKFAST was special with two eggs for him and Mildred barely able to nibble her toast for watching him. Each time she cleared her throat, he knew it was not because of what she found hard to say but because of what she wanted to avoid saying. With a bread-crust he mopped his plate clean of egg, at the same time keeping a sharp watch on the alarm clock beside him. Then he held out his cup for more coffee and, as she poured from the dented pot, he noticed once more how thin her arms were and how the bones at the base of her throat stood out like a little boy's bones. But she wasn't a little boy—she was a young woman, his wife, who had been faring on anxiety for more than three years. Only it was all over now. He would fatten her up and buy her new clothes and take her places. It was all over now. There would be no more relief jobs. He had handed in his resignation. This morning he would begin—his eyes reverted hastily to the clock—back with a private firm for the first time in over three years. The solemnity of the occasion suddenly caused his hand to shake; some coffee slopped onto the saucer.

Instantly Mildred spoke. "It's so perfectly marvelous, Seth," she said, her voice high and rattling. "I keep thinking, it's like a painter getting his brushes back and his easel and, oh, you know, everything. Isn't it? Don't you think so?"

"Hey, how do you get that way?" His voice was teasing. "I'm no artist. Nixon, maybe he calls himself an artist; but I'm just an operator, don't you forget it." He grinned. "And a damned good one, don't you forget that, either."

No one could deny that, he thought, no one who had ever done studio work with him. On the relief job, he might not have been so hot, taking censuses, taking everything but pictures. He knew, all right, what she had meant when she talked about getting the brushes back; she meant that he hadn't even had his portable camera to practice with, having had to sell it a couple of years back. And he also knew what she hadn't said but what had really been in her mind. Well, Jesus God, the breaks had been bad, that was all. If they had been good, he might have been running his own studio by now, like Nixon, and signing his name to his photographs. He'd be damned, though, if he would have gone in for the kind of soft-focus work that Nixon had showed him when he decided to give him the job. Not that he couldn't handle a soft-focus lens; he could handle any lens ever produced. And not that he had anything against Nixon; far from it; in fact, it had been

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all he could do to keep from kissing him, almost, when Nixon had singled him out of the applicants. He looked again at the clock. He didn't want to get there too early and make it look as if he was anxious. On the other hand, he *had* to be there on time. He felt Mildred's hand upon his own.

"*I* think you're an artist," she said. "I think you used to take—you take marvelous pictures." She squeezed his hand. "Look at your fingers, aren't they artist's fingers? And they'll be all brown again, like old times, from that stuff, what do you call it now?"

"The pyro?" he said airily. "Only, say, when were they brown?" He pretended to be injured. "They were never brown when I got home. I always used the stain-remover."

"Oh, that time I came up to the studio, they certainly *were* brown."

He burst into laughter. "We're nuts, aren't we?" he said fondly. "If any one could have peeked through the windows last night!"

Mildred laughed with him, recalling the scene the night before when, knowing for sure that he had the job, Seth had removed the shades from the standing lamps and arranged the glaring bulbs around her. Then he had moved the imaginary camera stand, while she posed as a bored society matron, and then a flibbertigibbet, and then an embarrassed young man. He had said he wanted the feel of getting the perspective or, as he put it more loftily, the angle of view. He had even peered through an imaginary camera. *Wet your lips a little, please. That's good. Now just raise your head a little. Keep your eyes at the height my hand is. Just hold that, please.* He had even pressed a mythical bulb and removed a mythical plate-holder and pretty soon they had been fooling round like a couple of kids.

"Gee, we acted like a couple of kids," she said, still laughing.

Seth's face became sober. That was what she had always wanted: real kids, not them playing at it. She'll have them, too. It's the turn of the tide, all right; no more relief jobs, no more fear of the pink slip. "Jesus God!" he yelled. "Look at the time." He rushed for his hat and coat and made for the door. Mildred ran after him and pulled at his arm.

"Just for luck," she said and traced a big horseshoe on his back.

He kissed her and raced down the stairs. He was fortunate, making good connections in the subway, and arrived on time at the studio. Nixon's wife showed him where to put his outer garments and took him right into the studio. He was glad Nixon was still upstairs where they lived. It gave him more time to get the feel of things. After three years of doing God knows what, only it wasn't photography, you had to get your hand in again. With the knob he racked the bellows of the big camera, moving first the ground glass and then the lens, focusing on all the objects in the room. He operated the horizontal swing and the vertical; then he examined the lights. They were honeys, not like the lights he had been accustomed to, three years ago. These were big babies with two-thousand-watt bulbs, sweet diffusing screens, and reflectors that were wonderfully designed. They looked like auto headlights. Those old reflectors, familiar to him, had always let the light spread too much. It was going to be a pleasure to work with these.

The equipment in this studio was neat; up-to-date and neat. The only thing that had had him buffaloed, when he had encountered it yesterday, had been the oblong of green glass in the dark-room safelight. He had been smart enough to keep his mouth shut, though, not telling Nixon that he had almost always worked with color-blind films under a red safelight. Of course, he had developed a few pan films; just enough of them to know how hard it was to judge density under the pale glow of the green. But that was all there was to it. Consequently, there was nothing he was unable to do here, except, maybe to retouch and Nixon was bugs on doing his own retouching. That was why he had decided to hire an operator. At the sound of Nixon's voice, he wheeled around and started to hold out his hand. He could feel it shaking and hastily let it fall, just saying in an over-hearty voice: "Good morning, Mr. Nixon."

Most of the morning, he just watched the boss who wanted him to get the hang of his style. In the mid-afternoon, he got his first sitting, a woman with a large face and minute, indistinct features. Seth fussed over her more than he would have; he had a paralyzing feeling that if he didn't get the first one perfect, he might never be any good. He knew how to handle the soft-focus lens, all right. There was nothing to it much, he kept telling himself, except to focus with the lens stopped down, instead of focusing first and stopping it down afterward. Only he had an alarmed feeling that Nixon might be watching him from some hiding-place, and that would slow up anyone. Also, every time he looked, his head hidden under the black cloth, at the woman's image in the ground glass, it seemed as if the highlights in her eyes wouldn't sharpen up. They looked fuzzy; too fuzzy even for portraits. Several times he had to stop and wipe the palms of his hands on his trousers. If he could only sneak out and have a smoke, he knew it would ease him up. For a while he fooled with the lights and moved the camera stand to cover up his indetermination. Then he realized that, although this might fox her, it wouldn't put anything over on Nixon, provided he was watching him. So he knew he had to press the bulb. Once he had done it, the next moves seemed to come easier.

After he had finished, he had to mop his face. "These lights get you pretty warm," he said in apology.

As soon as she left, he went into the dark-room with the films. Nixon wouldn't be able to have a peephole in there. He took the first one at hand out of its holder and inserted it into a hanger. If his hand was unsteady, dipping the film into the tank of developer, it wasn't because he was nervous any longer, it was just that the green light bothered him a little. After you've always worked under a red light, naturally, it takes a little time to get accustomed to the comparative gloom of the green; that was all. If Nixon thought he was going to be a boy wonder right off the bat, he had another think coming. As he continued to dip the film and inspect it against the green light coming through the oblong in the wall, he became a little sore at Nixon. Anybody

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ought to know it took a little while to get used to a new job. Then he wondered what in hell kind of formula Nixon used for his developer, because the film just wasn't getting to look right. That big face of hers was as black as night, a dense black blob. Either Nixon's developer was too contrasty or he'd been fooled by those trick lights and had overexposed. Well, he could still juggle a fair print out of the negative, anyway. He jerked the negative hastily from the developer, rinsed it briefly, and put it in the hypo to fix. Developing the rest of the films, he took a lesson from the first one and didn't waste much time on them. The density was fair, even though they were all kind of flat.

When he had them all in the hypo, he went outside to light a cigarette. Nixon looked up from his magazine and stared at him, he thought, rather strangely. Thinks I take too long, he told himself and puffed at his cigarette before speaking. "Nothing like getting back into harness," he said. Nixon nodded his head and returned to the magazine, so it was easy to saunter into the print-room where he could be alone. It was neat, all right, in there, with an up-to-date contact printer and a sweetheart of an enlarger. Everything your heart could ask for, from the print drier to the print flattener.

He made numerous trips to the dark-room, taking the films from the fixing bath, washing them, and waiting impatiently while they dried in front of a fan. He couldn't wait to make proofs. Presently, finding the films dry, he took them into the lab and prepared for the first test print. When the platen contacted the negative, it was marvelous, a snap, to have a reflecting mirror automatically thrown into position, with the light automatic, too. But the negative worried him; he kept adjusting the light, thinking maybe the paper wasn't fast enough. That big face of hers just didn't have any features, and for all the juggling of contrast papers he did, he knew he couldn't keep on kidding himself that it would come out right. Even an amateur could tell from the chalkiness of the whites alone that he had overexposed it. It would be a waste of time to develop the print. He moved on to the next film.

In about an hour and a half, he left the print-room. He was sweating again; and his face had a bad, sickly color to it. He had overexposed every single one of them. It must have been the lights, he told himself, he didn't know how to use them. Nixon had gone upstairs. He wouldn't have to explain anything till tomorrow. He put on his hat and coat and left. Thinking it over, he got it: these new lights were supposed to take only about one-fifth of a second, even with the lens at f. 11, for an exposure. He had just gone calmly ahead and exposed for one second, the way he had always done under the old lights. Well, once you knew, there was nothing to it. And he couldn't make that mistake again. Tomorrow, he would come right out and freely admit to Nixon that it had been caused by ignorance. Talking to himself this way, as he rode home, he got to feeling better. But when he saw the radiant, expectant expression on Mildred's face, he suddenly felt cold.

She reacted at once, scared, as she used to be when she was afraid he had got a pink slip. Although he hadn't wanted to talk about it, the change in her expression, with her eyes going hollow that way, finally caused him to say: "Hey, what do you want to pull a long face for? I miscalculated the time of the exposure, that's all. Anybody could do that. Nixon could do it. It isn't a crime."

To keep from losing his temper, he read the catalogues he had got from a supply-house, during supper and afterward. You could learn a lot about the new equipment that way. He even picked out a speed camera that he could save up to get, now that he had a real job. Only, after he went to bed, he lay for a long time, wide awake in the dark; and he knew that Mildred, she wasn't sleeping, either.

Nixon was good and sore about it, the next day, ranting about how his reputation was going to be ruined if all his clients had to come back for second sittings. Fortunately, there were plenty of appointments for both of them, a steady rush that didn't give Nixon much time to go on belly-aching. Otherwise, it was just more pressure on Seth, although one thing he made sure of was to avoid overexposures this time. The lights in the camera room were under control, all right, but the green light in the dark-room still disturbed him. He just couldn't trust his judgment of the films against that light. It gave him the willies, waiting for the damned things to fix, having to hope, instead of being sure, that they'd print better than they looked in the negative. Later, when he was working on the contact printer, Nixon came out and watched him a couple of times, saying once: "You're quite a demon for dodging."

Seth hadn't answered him because he didn't want to get sore. But when he saw finally how poorly most of the prints developed, he forgot to be sore. He was afraid. At home that night, he tried not to give himself away, rather than have Mildred get into a state. The first thing she said to him was: "How did it work out today, Seth?"

"O.K. We were busy as hell," he told her. "I'm going to turn in as soon as I give those catalogues another look."

The next day was supposed to be a half day, being Saturday. Seth didn't like the idea of its being the end of the week. He wished he had started in on a Monday, instead of a Thursday. Still, maybe it was a good thing to have some time off to brush up; he could go to the library and read some books on photography. Mrs. Nixon met him when he came in and told him her husband was staying in bed with a cold and expected Seth to take over his one appointment for the morning. The subject turned out to be a good-looking girl who came late and announced she could give only fifteen minutes to the sitting. Seth put out everything he had, but he knew he could have done even better if she hadn't rattled him, reminding him all the time that she was in a rush. He let his mind wander too much, he knew, trying to figure out if Nixon really was upstairs in bed or watching, making this a kind of final exam.

After the girl left, Mrs. Nixon popped in to ask if he minded staying overtime to develop the prints because Mr. Nixon wanted to see them before he left. He said "sure" and went into the dark-room, seeing a warning in the request. To his relief, the first film looked sweet and he felt that he was getting onto the green light. It

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bothered him hardly at all. But he hadn't watched the next film for more than a few seconds than he ripped out a curse. He had double-exposed. How in God's name could he have taken a double exposure? A child, a beginner would know better than that. Then he thought, if Nixon really stayed upstairs, if he really wasn't watching me, I'll tell him she was in such a hurry, she wouldn't let me take many. It would hardly be a lie, I only did get time to expose six films.

When he came to the next double exposure, he didn't curse. He knew now what he had done. That damned chippy made me rush so, he told himself, that I used exposed films. Only he couldn't blame it on the girl. The first thing *anyone* learned was to put the black rim out so that, with a glance at the holder, it could be seen that the film had been exposed. He must have slipped them back without thinking to keep the white rim inside, the black out. The greenest amateur knew enough to be careful about that. This wasn't a mistake, made out of ignorance, that you wouldn't let happen again, once you knew.

In the dark-room, when he left it, there were only three films hanging up to dry. He had double-exposed the other three. He went right out to Mrs. Nixon and said in a hard voice:

"You can tell him right now that I double-exposed three of them."

Not giving her time to answer him, he went into the print-room and stared at the enlarger, thinking: he may not even want me to stay to make the prints. Afraid I might ball up something else on the job. He'd be a God-damned fool to think there's anything left I haven't balled up already. How would he like it, if he hadn't had a camera in his hands for a couple of years?

Presently he heard Mrs. Nixon's high heels clacking toward him. He rested his hand on the contact printer to steady himself before facing her. When he saw the embarrassment in her face, he felt no more surprise, just heaviness.

She spoke in a low voice and tried not to look at him. "Of course, Mr. Nixon isn't feeling well, so he's more upset than he might be. About the double exposures, I mean. I understand *perfectly* how it is. Even he'll recognize it when he feels better, how it takes some time to get used to a new position, particularly after—after . . ." she halted, flushing.

"After working at something else. For three years. On a relief job," he said grimly.

"It isn't that I don't understand, but Mr. Nixon says he can't afford—he can only afford to have an operator who, well, as you said yourself, has been operating and so on, perhaps more recently." Still without looking directly at him, she held out a little envelope.

He took it from her; there were bills inside. "He makes up his mind good and quick, doesn't he?" His voice was bitter. "After only two and a half days."

"I know it must seem that way to you," she said in distress. "Really, he can't afford it. Why don't you go to a big studio, like Blye's, where they have so many operators, it wouldn't matter so much. I mean—you know what I mean."

"Sure. I know what you mean," he said levelly.

Then he moved to get his hat and coat. There wasn't any use to eat dirt trying to get it back, because he wouldn't get it back anyway. There wasn't any use in kicking about being let out after two and a half days, because he might not be any good after two and a half months. You learned a trade and thought you were pretty damned good at it and then there was no place where you could use what you had learned. Get a load of Blye's putting up with anybody for a couple of months while he learned it all over again and also had to learn not to be afraid that it wouldn't all come back to him. If you ever could learn not to be afraid of that. *What are they doing to me?* Putting me back on a relief job, putting me back to taking censuses, putting me back to waiting for the pink slip.

It wasn't just his hand shaking, it was all of him now. All right, think of the high-school kids who never get a crack at whatever trade they want to go in for. You were lucky, you had a few years at it, a while back. He made a face, trying to stop trembling. Then he held out his hands before him, as though to hypnotize them into steadiness. His fingers were stained with pyro. He had forgotten to use the remover. I'll go home with them like that, he thought, so Mildred can see them brown, once more, last time.

A 'Nation' Divided

By Granville Hicks

THE *NATION* recently celebrated the twentieth anniversary of the Soviet Union with an editorial, an article, and a book review. The article, by Maxwell S. Stewart, commented upon the industrial growth of the U.S.S.R., the rise in living standards, the progress in agriculture, "the extension of protection against the risks of modern society," the increase in democratic rights and civil liberties, and the beneficent role of the Soviet Union in world affairs. The editorial hailed Russia as the bulwark of western civilization against the onslaught of fascist barbarism. The book review talked about starvation, torture, slave psychology, the correctness of "Trotsky's thesis of the impossibility of building socialism in one country," and the movement of the U.S.S.R. "in the direction of fascism."

To casual readers of the *Nation* this difference of opinion may seem surprising but not significant. To the

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regular reader, however, it will seem very significant—and not in the least surprising. Some four years ago the book-review section seceded from the rest of the magazine, and it still exists in a state of rebellion. On the whole, the *Nation* has remained true to its traditions. It has been a liberal magazine, providing a forum for the various points of view the editors regarded as progressive. It has published articles for and against the Soviet Union, for and against the people's front in France, for and against the loyalist government in Spain, for and against the Communist Party. From our point of view, it has often been open to criticism, but it has taken the right side on many issues, and it has always tried to be fair.

The book-review section, on the other hand, has taken the wrong side on most issues, and it has not been fair. About what is the right and what the wrong side there can be infinite argument. About the lack of fairness there can be no argument at all. The bias of the *Nation's* book-review section can be proved.

Let us look, for example, at recent books on the Soviet Union. What is generally conceded to be the most important of recent studies, the Webbs' *Soviet Communism,* was given by the *Nation* to Abram Harris. Of the quality of the review, Louis Fischer, the *Nation's* own Moscow correspondent, has said all that needs saying. "He uses the review," Mr. Fischer wrote in a letter to the editors, "to air his own threadbare, shopworn, and uninteresting prejudices against the Soviet Union, which, I think, he has never seen. . . . What I miss is an evaluation of the service which the Webbs have performed in giving us a rich, comprehensive account of the workings of the Soviet system. . . . Where the Webbs fall down miserably—in their criticism of the Third International—Harris finds them 'more realistic.' "

Albert Rhys Williams's *The Soviets* and Anna Louise Strong's *The New Soviet Constitution* have not, so far as I can discover, been reviewed at all. On the other hand, when André Gide reported unfavorably on his visit to the U.S.S.R., the *Nation* could not wait for the book to be translated and published in this country, but brought out immediately a special and laudatory article by M. E. Ravage, its Paris correspondent.

And now, in this issue with the article and editorial commemorating the twentieth anniversary of the Soviets, we find a three-page review by Edmund Wilson. Seven books were given to Mr. Wilson, two of them pro-Soviet, five opposed. One of the pro-Soviet books, Dr. Gantt's *Medical Review of Soviet Russia* [issued in the United States as *Russian Medicine*] is judiciously described as containing some important facts. The other, which is dismissed in a contemptuous paragraph, is Lion Feuchtwanger's *Moscow, 1937,* published four months ago. Feuchtwanger, you know, was impressed by what he saw in the U.S.S.R., and therefore his book —instead of being hailed in a special article—is belatedly and maliciously reviewed by Mr. Wilson. The five anti-Soviet books, according to Mr. Wilson, "fill in a picture as appalling as it is convincing."

Within the past year, so far as I can discover, only one book on the Soviet Union was assigned to a pro-Soviet reviewer. That was Trotsky's *The Revolution Betrayed,* which was given to Louis Fischer—and also to Ben Stolberg. Repeatedly enemies of the Soviet Union have been allowed to voice their opinions, to damn books like the Webbs' and Feuchtwanger's, to praise books like André Gide's, Eugene Lyons's, and Victor Serge's. When, however, Trotsky's book is criticized by Louis Fischer, his criticism is paired with a fulsome eulogy by Stolberg!

Nor is it only with books on the Soviet Union that the bias becomes apparent. In 1936 Earl Browder, general secretary of the Communist Party, published a book called *What Is Communism?* The *Nation* assigned it to Louis M. Hacker. From any point of view, the choice was not a happy one, for Mr. Hacker, as a historian, concentrated his attention on Browder's discussion of the American past, and thus devoted most of his review to one chapter out of Browder's twenty-one. But, apart from the question of proportions and the relevance of the review, the significant point is that the literary editor of the *Nation* knew in advance that Mr. Hacker's review would be a bitter denunciation of the Communist Party and all its works.

James S. Allen's *The Negro Question in the United States* was assigned to Sterling D. Spero, whose quarrel with the position Mr. Allen takes was familiar to most well-informed persons. Maurice Thorez's *France Today* and Ralph Fox's *France Faces the Future* were reviewed by Suzanne LaFollette, who had hitherto not been known as an authority on either France or politics, but who, as a disciple, at least so far as the people's front is concerned, of Leon Trotsky, could be depended on to attack the Communist International and to question the integrity of Fox and Thorez. *Spain in Revolt,* by Harry Gannes and Theodore Repard, was given to Anita Brenner, who devoted her entire review—entitled "Let's Call It Fiction"—to attacking the authors and denouncing the people's front in Spain.

During the same period, I hasten to say, five books that are, in various ways, sympathetic to the views of the Communist Party were given favorable reviews: my *John Reed,* Spivak's *Europe Under the Terror,* Anna Rochester's *Rulers of America,* Joseph Freeman's *An American Testament,* and Angelo Herndon's *Let Me Live,* reviewed by Max Lerner, Frederick L. Schuman, George Marshall, Louis Kronenberger, and Horace Gregory. So far as I can disengage myself from the political convictions that are involved in my estimate of all the books, and the personal prejudices involved in my estimate of one, I think the reviews were, from the liberal point of view that the *Nation* is supposed to represent, more adequate than the reviews by Hacker, Spero, Miss LaFollette, and Miss Brenner. I also think it is worth pointing out that these books do not raise very sharply the issues at stake between the Communist Party and the Trotskyites. Finally, it is obvious that not one of the five reviewers can be regarded as a spokesman of the Communist Party, and some of them are, as a matter of fact, critical of its policies. However, I want it on the record that these five books received favorable reviews in the *Nation.*

Does this disprove my charge that the literary section of the *Nation* is biased? I am afraid not. It only indicates that the bias does not operate all the time—

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perhaps because it would be too easily discovered if it did. I have spoken of the way books on the Soviet Union have been reviewed, books on the policies of the Communist Party in the United States, books on the people's front in France, a book in defense of the loyalist government of Spain. I have said that the *Nation* neglected two important books on the U.S.S.R., and I might add that it also failed to review Dutt's *World Politics* and William Z. Foster's *From Bryan to Stalin*.

But what reveals the bias of the literary section beyond any question is that the Communist Party is never allowed to speak for itself. It is at least four years since there appeared in the *Nation* a review by a person who could by any stretch of the imagination be regarded as the party's spokesman. A few sympathizers have reviewed for the magazine, it is true, but for the most part books far removed from the struggle over communism. Books opposed to the Communist Party have been given to reviewers opposed to the Communist Party. Who reviewed James Rorty's *Where Life Is Better?* Anita Brenner. Who reviewed Charles Rumford Walker's *American City?* James Rorty. Who reviewed Fred Beal's *Proletarian Journey?* Rorty reviewed it, and then Edmund Wilson reviewed it again. Did it occur to the literary editor that, in the interests of the forum principle, Beal's book might be given to someone who held different opinions of the Soviet Union? No, it was reviewed twice, and both times by persons who, everyone knew, would endorse Beal's attack.

When Mr. Wilson's *Travels in Two Democracies* appeared, it was conceivable that *Nation* readers might be interested in hearing the other side, but the book was reviewed by Margaret Marshall. Philip Rahv was given Céline's *Mea Culpa,* and, though he could not praise the book, he took the occasion to approve Céline's disapproval of "the present Soviet leaders." Sidney Hook disagreed with Albert Weisbord's *Conquest of Power,* but he used his review to attack "the opportunist leadership of the Communist Party."

It becomes perfectly apparent that the policy of the book section of the *Nation* is not the policy of an open forum. I can remember a time when Communists were asked to review for the *Nation,* but that has not happened since the end of 1933, when Joseph Wood Krutch became literary editor. With his arrival, the Communists went out and the anti-Communists came in. Anita Brenner attacked Hugo Gellert's *Capital.* Edna Kenton praised Tchernavin's *Escape from the Soviets.* Reinhold Niebuhr was given a page in which to praise the pamphlet, *Socialism's New Beginning.* James Burnham devoted a review of Palme Dutt's *Fascism and Social Revolution* to the thesis that "acceptance of the line of the Communist International means political blindness."

Meanwhile it became reasonably certain that any left-wing novel would be damned in the *Nation.* Cool indifference or forthright condemnation met Albert Halper's *The Foundry,* Josephine Herbst's *The Executioner Waits,* Waldo Frank's *Death and Birth of David Markand,* Edward Newhouse's *You Can't Sleep Here,* Thomas Boyd's *In Time of Peace,* Erskine Caldwell's *Kneel to the Rising Sun,* Clara Weatherwax's *Marching, Marching!,* and Isidor Schneider's *From the Kingdom of Necessity.* Nobody argues that they are all masterpieces, but the unanimity of Mr. Krutch's reviewers is a little suspicious. Only last spring he handed three left-wing novels to James T. Farrell for exactly the kind of strong-arm job for which Mr. Farrell is notorious.

During these four years Mr. Krutch's own war against communism has been conducted in his dramatic criticism, in essays on literature, and even in political articles. No Communist has been allowed to talk back. When Mr. Krutch's series of articles, *Was Europe a Success?,* was published in book form, it was assigned, not to a Communist, but to Harry Elmer Barnes, a Scripps-Howard liberal. And Mr. Krutch has protected his friends: parts of Farrell's *A Note on Literary Criticism* had appeared in the *Nation,* and therefore the policy of the good controversy would have suggested that the book's reviewer should be chosen from the many critics Farrell attacked, but it was given to Edmund Wilson, who was chiefly concerned to add a few criticisms of the Marxists that Farrell had been unable to think of.

Dr. Krutch's anti-Communist obsession reached its height when he joined the American Committee for the Defense of Trotsky. Criticized for his action, Mr. Krutch insisted that his interest in Trotsky "was exclusively an interest in fair play." To most of us that interest had seemed quite dormant during the past decade, as one case after another of injustice failed to rouse him to protest. Nevertheless, no one suspected him of being a Trotskyite. We merely felt that he joined the Trotsky Committee for the sake of attacking the Communist Party, just as, for three years, he had been using only too eager Trotskyist reviewers to attack Communist books.

Dr. Krutch has given up the literary editorship to return to the academic life, but the situation on the magazine does not seem to have improved under his successor, Margaret Marshall. Those who were present at the second American Writers' Congress will recall a little group of individuals whose purpose in attending seemed to be to prevent the congress from accomplishing the ends for which it was convened. Chief among the disrupters were Dwight MacDonald, Mary McCarthy, Philip Rahv, and William Phillips. All of them have been contributing to the *Nation,* and it is apparent that Miss Marshall, in her new position, counts on this little coterie, in addition to the larger group of enemies of the Communist Party assembled by her predecessor.

In the relatively short time since Dr. Krutch's retirement, Rahv has been the most active, and it is interesting to trace his career. Prior to the Writers' Congress, his attacks on communism had been cautious. After the congress, reviewing Ostrovski's *The Making of a Hero,* he virtually announced his open anti-communist campaign with a characteristically cheap innuendo: "Marxists, being fond of discerning contradictions in the social process, ought to apply their analytic prowess to investigating the discrepancy between the prodigious dimensions and meanings of the October revolution and the feeble records of it recently produced

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on its home grounds by writers seemingly most devoted to its progress."

Mr. Rahv's next gesture was a review, pretentious and sneering and rather childish, of a book of short stories by Leane Zugsmith. It was quite inevitable that Miss Marshall should assign him Walter Duranty's *One Life, One Kopeck* and Robert Briffault's *Europa in Limbo,* and equally inevitable that he should seize upon literary weaknesses, not unrecognized by other reviewers, to prosecute his attack on communism and the Soviet Union. To date, however, his most revealing review is that of Ilf and Petrov's *Little Golden America,* which gives the impression—wholly false, it is needless to say—that the Soviet humorists were so impressed by American machines that they failed to say a word in criticism of the capitalist system that controls those machines.

Miss Marshall's reliance upon this particular turncoat, despite his general incompetence as a literary critic and his peculiar unfitness to review books on the Soviet Union, does not promise well for her regime as literary editor. It seems possible, indeed, that, even more fully than Dr. Krutch, she will make the book section of the *Nation* an organ of the Trotskyites. I do not care whether these persons call themselves Trotskyites or not. I know that they are opposed to the Communist Party, to the Soviet Union, and to the people's front, and that they use exactly the same arguments as Trotsky uses. They are united, I suspect, by a common hatred rather than by a positive policy, but that does not alter the role they play.

It appears to me that readers of the *Nation* are being deceived. The NEW MASSES takes a definite position, and its book-review section is edited according to a stated policy. By no means are all the contributors Communists, but it is not our intention to publish reviews by persons who are hostile to the Soviet Union or are unwilling to work in the people's front against fascism. The *Nation* has no such clear-cut policy. In the body of the magazine, as I have said, it tries to be fair. In the book section, however, it discriminates against one point of view and favors another. And this is never stated.

I presume that most readers of the *Nation* are what we call, not very precisely these days, liberals. I suspect that many of them are friendly to the Soviet Union and would not willingly aid its enemies. Almost all, certainly, are opposed to fascism and are eager to find effective ways of fighting it. They know that the people's front is the strongest barrier against fascism and at the same time a positive force for progress. I should like to convince these people that, all questions of sincerity to one side, the Trotskyites do in effect injure the Soviet Union and hamper the fight against fascism. I think that, if they happened to belong to trade unions or other organizations in which Trotskyites were active, they would see this for themselves.

But even if these liberal *Nation* readers do not share my opinions, I wonder if they really like the fare that is being served them. Do they subscribe to the *Nation* to listen to the notions of a little clique of anti-Communists, or do they want the opinions of representative authorities? Have they not the right to demand that, in its book reviews as elsewhere, the *Nation* should follow the principles it avows? And should they not, if necessary, take steps to enforce their demands?

Poetry in 1937

By Horace Gregory

IT WOULD BE possible to view this season's poetry* with a wearied sickly eye, to see failure everywhere. It would be possible to see nothing in E. A. Robinson's *Collected Poems* except an old man writing his "dime novels in verse," and to read in Sara Teasdale nothing but her last retreat in finding wisdom only in utter silence. One could then wish that Mr. Jeffers had not followed his long road downward, declining very like Spengler's *Decline of the West* into melodrama, until he now sees all his men and women as less than human and far inferior to hawks, eagles, certain breeds of horses, and Pacific seascapes. One could regret that Allen Tate's preface to his selected poems is insufferably pretentious and in dubious taste. One could also complain that Mr. Stevens has taken a symbol for his art which is not inevitable and which too often remains a fanciful "blue guitar." One could say that the younger writers in this group should be far better: one could ask far more of everyone here and at the end conclude that in this year, 1937, a quarter century after the accepted date of a "poetic renaissance," American poetry has gone down the drain and the less said of it the better.

But to arrive at this conclusion would be contrary to my belief, for I believe this moment affords us time to take stock of what has happened in poetry, what is happening now, and what seems now fairly certain to happen within the next few years. Because the early hopes of 1912 were not sustained in 1930, some critics of both

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* COLLECTED POEMS, *by E. A. Robinson. The Macmillan Co.* $3.
COLLECTED POEMS, *by Sara Teasdale. The Macmillan Co.* $2.50.
SUCH COUNSELS YOU GAVE TO ME, *by Robinson Jeffers. Random House.* $2.
SELECTED POEMS, *by Allen Tate. Charles Scribner's Sons.* $2.50.
THE MAN WITH A BLUE GUITAR, *by Wallace Stevens. Alfred A. Knopf.* $2.
POEMS, 1929-1936, *by Dudley Fitts. New Directions.* $2.
NOT ALONE LOST, *by Robert McAlmon. New Directions.* $2.
TWELVE POETS OF THE PACIFIC, *edited by Yvor Winters. New Directions.* $2.50.
TOMORROW'S PHOENIX, *by Ruth Lechlitner. Alcestis Press.* $3.

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left and right persuasion were led to think that the streams of poetry in America had narrowed to a single trail of a sunken river-bed in a once fertile valley. But since that time a group of new names have appeared and the prominence of other names have diminished. The poets of *New Letters in America* and of the NEW MASSES represent the majority of the influences now at work in changing the picture from one of a single "waste-land" generalization to another that promises to be a new phase in American poetry.

The *Collected Poems* of E. A. Robinson offers us the opportunity to say a few words in revaluation of a poet whose figure now seems to fill the empty spaces of the decade before 1912. That figure seems far more secure today than it was ten years ago. The Robinson to be rediscovered by our generation is the poet who looked deeply into the world of his young manhood, a world of insecure prosperity, commanded by "robber barons." At its heart he saw the broken Bewick Finzers, the drunken Eben Floods, and as he wrote of literary heroes, even Shakespeare became the uneasy man of property who had built a house to hide his bones in Stratford. The E. A. Robinson, who in the first decade of the present century foresaw disaster where others read endless perpetuation of American success, had learned the technique of making his verse move with conversational directness. This art, so I suspect, was learned from Crabbe and Hardy and today it seems a Robinsonian irony that his method was once regarded as too obscure and too elliptical for critical understanding. He was most assuredly not using the poetic diction of his fellow poets in America, and because his work was too often praised or rejected for the wrong reasons, as he grew older he delighted in confusing his critics by leading them from one sublimated detective story to the next, and there were times when he deliberately recreated modern men and women in the disguise of Arthurian heroes and heroines.

Sara Teasdale's love songs were the contrasting echoes of another voice to Robinson's. She was, I think, more nearly a transitional poet than many who have earned that title in the present generation. Her verse forms, her diction, her desires to create a "mood" rather than to convey precise emotion stemmed directly from the conventions of lyric poetry of the later nineteenth century. Christina Rosetti was her model, and many of her love songs which were popular twenty years ago seem now to be latter-day versions of "A Daughter of Eve." Yet by speaking her poems in a frankly plaintive or joyous note, she was to anticipate the so-called personal qualities of Miss Millay's lyricism: she had created a minor heroine in verse, a young woman, who, if kissed or unkissed, promptly told the world and made the telling seem to express a new era of nascent feminism. The epigrammatic turn of her short stanzas was sharpened by a touch of urban smartness, as though the heroine thus created knew her own way through a city of men who sat on tops of Fifth Avenue buses or who gazed at her over white linen gleaming from the round surfaces of restaurant tables. The city lights were written of in terms of bright beads or jewels worn at evening. The young woman seemed like a good child released for a short moment from the comforts of a stolid middle-class home. At the hour of Sara Teasdale's death in 1933, the phenomenon of her popularity had passed its meridian: other heroines had arrived who were bolder and who spoke a language influenced by imagism, or the seventeenth-century lyricists, or Emily Dickinson, or Yeats, or Hopkins.

Among the changes in public consciousness that had caused Sara Teasdale's world to seem less certain and more trivial was another phenomenon in poetry which appeared in 1926 under the title of *Roan Stallion, Tamar, and Other Poems*. Today that phenomenon seems less important as it reëmerges in Mr. Jeffers's new book which contains one narrative poem and a group of shorter pieces. It now seems unlikely that Mr. Jeffers will ever again approximate the quality of authentic tragic meaning which entered his "Tower Beyond Tragedy," for he has reiterated his familiar story of incest, and on this occasion his study in human pathology opens with sexual madness only to close with homicidal insanity. And here I am convinced that the real reasons why Mr. Jeffers's men and women go insane must be sought out in the poet's rejection of human consciousness. Mr. Jeffers's premise of Wordsworthian pantheism (which was clearly evident in *California*, the book written before *Roan Stallion*) has made it impossible for him to accept man or god, or any mode of conduct here on earth. The political poems in the present volume reiterate his passionate longing for a golden age, a pastoral age, now far behind us: he stands squarely against civilization in all its forms and yet knows well that man cannot live sanely if placed on the same level with animals. The vicious circle he has created closes around him in darkness, saving only for the moment a quality of savage wit in his shorter poems which did not appear in his earlier work.

The distance between Allen Tate and Robinson Jeffers is much shorter than one might at first suppose. Again a defeated passion for a pastoral society plays its role, and Mr. Tate remarks with the curious force of a pathetic fallacy, "We are the eyelids of defeated caves." His present book includes everything that he wishes to save from the three books he has written, and though a few of the poems convey the impression of dignity in the presence of death, the weighted language that Mr. Tate employs more often leaves one feeling that all he says is pretentious rather than deeply felt or realized. Yet Mr. Tate and his work still represent the desire of younger southern writers (who after contact with post-war Europe came home to native soil) to build a cultural movement on the ruins of the old South. Mr. Tate's preoccupation with past glory and its ruins is no less significant in its failure than Mr. Jeffers's concern with the loss of faith in human consciousness.

From these we turn to Wallace Stevens, of whom I once wrote, "He is not merely a connoisseur of fine rhythms and the precise nuances of the lyrical line, but a trained observer who gazes with an intelligent eye upon the decadence that follows the rapid acquisition of power." This was not to say, however, that the poet himself was "left" in sympathy or that his primary intention was to write political poetry. This was to

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say that Wallace Stevens's sensibilities in writing verse had made it possible for him to view the world about him with singular acuteness. Today his vision has the same qualities of sharpness, but is now dimmed by the effort to explain his "position" in a medium ill-suited to the demands of exposition. His man with the blue guitar—the blue guitar his art, the man the artist—is a symbol that lacks the power of inevitable choice; other instruments or another color could have been chosen, and it would seem that Mr. Stevens by his choice confuses the functions of fancy and imagination. His defense is a defense of the artist in a world where the things he looks at seem to be intractable materials for his art and are therefore less real than his "blue guitar." Throughout the first half of his book, its title poem, in thirty-three sections, weaves its way and is convincing only when Mr. Stevens recreates what he would call the "anti-poetic" image in such lines as

> Through Oxidia, banal suburb,
> One-half of all its installments paid

And it is only when his real ability in writing satire appears, as in "The Mechanical Optimist," a portrait of a lady at the radio, that his present work equals the quality of his earlier verse. Yet, in contrast to Mr. Tate's irony, Mr. Stevens's satire is far more felicitous whenever it finds a target; and unlike Mr. Tate's verse, the images within it never fail to flow, one from the other, in emotional progression.

Of the three books of poems issued by New Directions, of Norfolk, Conn., Dudley Fitts's *Poems, 1929-1936* is by far the most impressive. All three books have one characteristic in common, for Robert McAlmon's book as well as Mr. Fitts's and Yvor Winters's collection of *Twelve Poets of the Pacific* represent the influences and styles of verse written since 1925. It would be easy to dismiss Mr. Fitts's book as a mere reflection in technique of Pound, Eliot, Cummings, and MacLeish: these immediate influences are so obvious that one meets them squarely on each page, and among them familiar attitudes of rejection, prayer, blasphemy, and irony are reintroduced within the formal patterns so well established by their originators. Yet Mr. Fitts's verse has a quality of gayety and wit that is quite its own. If he may be regarded as a transitional poet between the period from which he has borrowed his attitudes and the present date, he appears as the forerunner of a kind of wit that is beginning to take form in the work of younger poets.

Robert McAlmon is far less fortunate than Mr. Fitts in his application of the techniques which were developed during tht last ten years. Each poem in his collection has little means of guiding a brilliant opening to its conclusion; quite like the verse with which Amy Lowell once experimented, it remains "free" and a sharp image is frequently clouded by an uncertain or merely descriptive close. Of the poems in this book, only the bull-fight scenes in Spain convey something of the physical reality which seems to lie behind their imagery.

Mr. Winters's twelve poets, himself included, are in immediate reaction against the schools of verse represented by Mr. Fitts and Mr. McAlmon. And of these twelve Janet Lewis alone seems to have converted her reaction into a positive virtue. The chief difficulty that Mr. Winters and his group of poets have encountered is in their naïve conception of a rigid verse form. Mr. Winters's seriousness of intention has long been his single virtue. And as he states his program of "clarity" and of "feeling in terms of the motive," there is every reason to agree with him. But the results of this statement, if verse can ever be called the result of any critical commentary, echo the sententious quality of Mr. Tate's verse to which are added the horrors of Victorian platitude in word and texture. I quote one stanza of a poem which sounds very like a translation from the German as it might have been written by a young woman in an English seminary at the close of the last century:

> How could I praise thee
> Loved I not wisdom much?
> How could I love thee
> Were I not praising such?

Contrast the mechanical uses of "form" in this quotation with the genuine clarity of Miss Lewis's

> Mild and slow and young,
> She moves about the room,
> And stirs the summer dust
> With her wide broom.

But Miss Lewis's poems in the collection are all too few and her good work is placed among such college classroom curiosities as "To Miss Evelyn C. Johnson on Her Examination for the Doctorate in English," which closes with the discovery:

> For you have learned, not what to say,
> But how the saying must be said.

Miss Lechlitner's first book *Tomorrow's Phoenix* is in distinct contrast to *Twelve Poets of the Pacific:* there is here far greater variety of texture and feeling and more frequent attempts to master the complex forms of contemporary verse. The book errs on the side of attempting to move in too many directions at once, yet the intention behind it (if I read it rightly) shows an active, if at times too hasty, appreciation of the color and movement in contemporary life. In that sense Miss Lechlitner's work exhibits many signs of promise and in contrast to other books in the selection I have made (Mr. Fitts excepted), it has greater speed and little repetition. Yet her political verse which shows an awareness of events today is less controlled and less effective than her "Song of Starlings" which is far removed from the other poems in the book. And as I read her book, I thought of the essay on political poetry published in No. 9 of *International Literature,* which brings me to a generalization concerning American poetry in 1937.

The essay in *International Literature* reminded its readers that political poetry as such cannot be divorced from other kinds of poetry, no more than we here in

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America can ask a poet to be political one moment and non-political the next. If his convictions are secure and contrary to ours, we may deplore the fact, but if his work is mature and centered in our culture, we, as critics, should be able to interpret from it the character of the society in which the poet lives. I for one would rather study certain warnings of disaster in American middle-class society through the early poetry of E. A. Robinson than in the work of many of his contemporaries in prose. Mr. Jeffers's inability to adjust his sense of loss to any sane solution is a warning of another kind, less important than E. A. Robinson's in proportion to his ability as a poet. Some few poems by Mr. Tate are visible proof of the inadequate nature of his longing to recreate a kind of aristocracy in the South, which no longer exists but whose irony has been far more brilliantly revealed by John Crowe Ransom. Even Mr. Stevens's desire to restate his relationship to a "blue guitar" throws light upon matters of concern to writers in existing society. and the books published by the New Directions press as well as Miss Lechlitner's first book show the complex of literary influence at work upon the latest generation of American poets. If confusion or serious conflict between word and intention exists among younger writers, we may be fairly certain of two things: one, a lack of organic meaning in the poetry they write, which may be traced to the conflicts in their environment; and two, a failure to master the techniques they have chosen for their medium.

Meanwhile it is evident that whatever failures may be recorded against this season's poetry in America there is adequate proof that much of it is neither stagnant nor dull. If the reputations of the period between 1928 and the present seem less secure than they appeared to be as recently as 1933, I think we can be well assured that no single destructive influence will long prevail in contemporary verse. The desert, which seemed impassable in 1930 because some critics saw Robinson Jeffers alone within it, has now given way to another prospect of the future in American poetry. Whatever that future may be, it will contain within it younger poets who are more aware of conflict than defeat, and the sources of their work, as in the past, will be the contrasting influences which have given American poetry its singular ability to surmount its many failures.

Literary Fascism in Brazil

By Samuel Putnam

THE STORY of what fascism does to literature is an old one by this time. It would be pointless to relate once again the burning of the books. We now know that this is a characteristic occurrence; and we are not surprised to learn that Franco, upon entering the city of Tolosa, ordered a bonfire of "Marxist" works like the one that was kindled in front of the Berlin Opera House. As Ilya Ehrenbourg has remarked, when Herr Doktor Goebbels—whatever his local name and habitation—sets foot in a library, he instinctively reaches for a match box. There is, frequently, an element of personal literary frustration involved, as in Goebbels's own case, with a resulting intense hatred of decent writing and writers; for the triumph of fascism is at once followed by an upward surge of tenth-raters of the Hans Heinz Ewers brand. This, too, is a fairly constant phenomenon. Accordingly, when we hear that the Brazilian Integralistas have banned *Tom Sawyer* as being a "Red" and "subversive" production, it merely strikes us as being the height of something or other.

Which is to say, literary fascism in Brazil is in general following the stupid line laid down by the Nazi "regenerators," with, naturally, certain variations due to nationality, race, traditions, geographic situation, and the like. It is these more or less distinctive variations that interest us chiefly. The period of the cultural transition to fascism has not been properly studied in connection with either Italy or Germany; and by this time many of the first sharp vivid edges have been glossed over for the outside world. In Brazil, the process is not as yet completed; there is still left at least the remnant of an intelligent opposition, and what is happening at the moment is exciting to watch. Exciting and instructive; since it is from the study of such a period that we in North America, with the signs of an incipient cultural fascism all about us, have most to learn.

Nowhere, for one thing, is fascism's quick stifling of creative effort more startlingly brought out than by a contrast of Brazilian writing for the year 1935 with that of 1936, the year in which the Vargas régime came into power. It is part of the present writer's job, as editor of the Brazilian literature section of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies* (Harvard University Press), to inspect every item that comes from the presses of Brazil in the course of the year which may possibly be of literary significance. In 1934, this writer had observed the rise of a literature possessed of true social depth and consciousness, and often with a revolutionary-proletarian orientation. This, for example, was the year that saw the publication of Jorge Amado's *Cacáu* (Cocoa), a novel by one who had been a worker on the great cocoa plantations, and the same author's *Suór* (Sweat), the story of a Bahian tenement. In 1935, Brazilian letters appeared to have achieved a promise which had been maturing for a number of years past. There was a baker's dozen of first-rate novels, and among them at least one masterpiece in Erico Verissimo's *Caminhos Cruzados* (Crossroads), which was

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revolutionary at once in content and in technique. There were also several outstanding volumes of poetry; and the impression to be derived from the scene as a whole was one of great creative activity and vitality.

The next year, 1936—after Vargas had been in for a year—it was all one could do to find three or four novels that were really deserving of notice. These were the work of writers who had made their reputations during the past few years of free and socially inspired creativeness. In most cases they represented a slackening of effort on the part of their authors, with a pronounced tendency to deviate from the social to the genre theme (as in the case of Amado), or in the direction of the semi-social sex novel (as in the case of Verissimo). Sex, indeed, has come to be the all-absorbing subject of literary controversy, and the most discussed novel of the year (1936) was, probably, Luis Martins's *Lapa* (the name of a red-light district), which deals with prostitution. At the same time, it is very largely upon the subject of sex that the literary reactionaries are concentrating their fire, in the form of attacks on the Freudian influence, that of D. H. Lawrence, etc., while the intellectuals, in place of fighting out the major life-and-death issue, feel obliged to defend themselves against charges of "pornography."

If the novel in 1935 showed a dismal falling off, poetry practically expired; what one finds is merely a collected volume or two by well-known men. On the other hand, 1936 is marked by a plethora of critical articles and books of criticism. There is an inordinate amount of literary stock-taking, crystallized in the form of evaluations of the 1935 output. Brazilian writers at the present time would appear to be almost exclusively engaged in writing about one another's past performances. This is what commonly happens under fascism: in place of books, endless books about books, an incessant critical rehashing, as in Italy, a thumbing over of the masterpieces of a past year.

But perhaps we may let a Brazilian critic sum it up for us. In the introduction to his 1936 anthology, *A nova literatura brasileira* (The New Brazilian Literature), Andrade Muricy declares that the present-day writing of his countrymen exhibits an "opulence without roots," a "paradoxical Byzantism." He ascribes this to the intrusion of the political, "to the exclusion of an art based upon pure humanity and the human spirit." He sees in it all a *trahison des clercs,* with propaganda usurping the place of literature, and deplores the tendency to a rigid oversimplification, leading to an inevitable aridity. But whose is the propaganda?

Muricy goes on to point out the existence of a "literary fascism" (the phrase is his), which may be traced back to the futuristic disportings, reminiscent of Marinetti's, of Brazilian writers in the early twenties; in other words, he sees this "literary fascism" as the offshoot of an exacerbated "modernism."

There is, however, even in the Brazil of the Integralistas, a criticism that cuts a little deeper than this, and which amounts to a profound questioning of life's realities, social, political, and economic. This saving criticism, the last stand of the Brazilian intelligence, is coming from the anthropologists and ethnologists, a number of whom are semi-literary figures; and the scientists in turn are accused of corrupting the novelists by upsetting traditions of race, Catholic morality, and sexual decency. Most distinguished of the anthropologists is Professor Gilberto Freyre, of international reputation, who is dubbed an "agitator," while his scientific masterpiece, *Casa Grande & Senzala* (the title is not readily translatable), is described in a Catholic-monarchist organ as being "a pernicious book, subversively anti-national, anti-Catholic, anarchistic, communistic," the reviewer adding that "book and author are deserving of purification by a nationalistic and Christian *auto da fé.*"

This last indicates only too plainly the fate in store for the courageous Brazilian intellectual who stands by his guns. The reactionaries are not sparing of their threats. Not only do they find a scientific work like *Casa Grande & Senzala* "shamelessly pornographic . . . watercloset literature"; they also tell us what they mean to do about Freud and D. H. Lawrence, as witness the following from the monthly, *Fronteiras*: "Freud and Lawrence, ah! Once Brazil shall have come mentally of age, she will settle accounts with you."

For an understanding of the contemporary scene, certain peculiarities of Brazilian fascism are to be kept in mind. One is the heavy Catholic complexion of the Integralistas movement, which differentiates it sharply from a "neo-Gothic," anti-religious Hitlerism, and which is characteristic of South American fascism in general. As for the Catholic monarchists, corresponding to the Action Française in France. they would bring back a descendant of the nineteenth-century emperors. Enforcement of the church's precepts with regard to sex and all other matters thereby becomes an offensive tactic and is employed as such. Hence all the fuss over the "pornography" of the few good writers that Brazil has left.

With respect to race, anti-Semitism is by now rampant, as is evidenced by a volume that has just come to this desk, *Nacionalismo; o problema judaico e o nacional-socialismo* (Nationalism; the Jewish Question and National Socialism), by Anor Butler Maciel who, incidentally, is half British by birth. Anti-Semitism, however, has not yet reached the stage of viciousness that it has in the Argentine, in the writings of a Hugo Wast. It is quite vicious enough, for all of that; and we find Señor Maciel making use of the same sources as Señor Wast, namely, the "Protocols of Zion" and the Dearborn *Independent.* The Dutch are hated even more than the Jews in certain provinces.

The Negro fares the best of all. He is the object of a great deal of scientific and literary interest just now, and a member of the Brazilian Academy of Letters is to be heard admitting that Cruz e Souza, a Negro and the son of a slave, was "the major poet of modern Brazil." The Negro has also been the subject of a number of recent novels; but in them he is treated as a curiosity rather than as a social being. The truth of the matter is that the brown-skinned native of Brazil is hardly likely to start inquiring too closely into his blood-stream on this side.

This about gives the picture of Brazilian literature at the present hour. Add a few terrible treatises by the pushing tenth-raters, and you will have it all.

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Two Poems

THE DISEASE

This is a lung disease. Silicate dust makes it.
The dust causing the growth of

This is the X-ray picture taken last April.
I would point out to you: these are the ribs;
this is the region of the breastbone;
this is the heart (a wide white shadow filled with blood).
In here of course is the swallowing tube, esophagus.
The windpipe. Spaces between the lungs.

Between the ribs?

Between the ribs. These are the collar bones.
Now, this lung's mottled, beginning, in these areas.
You'd say a snowstorm had struck the fellow's lungs.
About alike, that side and this side, top and bottom.
The first stage in this period in this case.

Let us have the second.

Come to the window again. Here is the heart.
More numerous nodules, thicker, see, in the upper lobes.
You will notice the increase: here, streaked fibrous tissue—

Indicating?

That indicates the progress in ten months' time.
And now, this year—short breathing, solid scars
even over the ribs, thick on both sides.
Blood vessels shut. Model conglomeration.

What stage?

Third stage. Each time I place my pencil point:
There and there and there, there, there.

"It is growing worse every day. At night
I get up to catch my breath. If I remained
flat on my back I believe I would die."

It gradually chokes off the air cells in the lungs?
I am trying to say it the best I can.
That is what happens, isn't it?
A choking-off in the air cells?

Yes.

There is difficulty in breathing.

Yes.

And a painful cough?

Yes.

Does silicosis cause death?

Yes, sir.

THE CORNFIELD

Error, disease, snow, sudden weather.
For those given to contemplation: this house,
wading in snow, its cracks are sealed with clay,
walls papered with print, newsprint repeating,
in-focus gray across the room, and squared
ads for a book: *Heaven's My Destination,*
Heaven's My . . . Heaven . . . Thornton Wilder.
The long-faced man rises long-handed jams the door
tight against snow, long-boned, he shivers.
Contemplate.

Swear by the corn,
the found-land corn, those who like ritual. *He*
rides in a good car, they say blind corpses rode
with him in front, knees broken into angles,
head clamped ahead. Overalls. Affidavits.
He signs all papers. His office: where he sits,
feet on the stove, loaded trestles through door,
satin-lined, silk-lined, unlined, cheap.
The papers in the drawer. On the desk, photograph
H. C. White, Funeral Services (new car and eldest son);
tells about Negroes who got wet at work,
shot craps, drank and took cold, pneumonia, died.
Shows the sworn papers. Swear by the corn.
Pneumonia, pneumonia, pleurisy, t.b.

For those given to voyages: these roads
discover gullies, invade, Where does it go now?
Now turn upstream twenty-five yards. Now road again.
Ask the man on the road. Saying, That cornfield?
Over the second hill, through the gate,
watch for the dogs. Buried, five at a time,
pine boxes, Rinehart & Dennis paid him fifty-five dollars
a head for burying those men in plain pine boxes.
George Robinson: I knew a man
who died at four in the morning at the camp.
At seven his wife took clothes to dress her dead
husband, and at the undertaker's
they told her the husband was already buried.
—Tell me this, the men with whom you are acquainted,
the men who have this disease
have been told that sooner or later they are going to die?
—Yes, sir.
—How does that seem to affect the majority of the people?
—It don't work on anything but their wind.
—Do they seem to be living in fear
or do they wish to die?
—They are getting to breathe a little faster.

For those given to keeping their own garden:
Here is the cornfield, white and wired by thorns,
old cornstalks, snow, the planter's home.
Stands bare against a line of far her field,
unmarked except for wood stakes, charred at tip,
few scratched and named (pencil or nail).
Washed-off. Under the mounds,
all the anonymous.
Abel America, calling from under the corn,
Earth, uncover my blood!
Did the undertaker know the man was married?
Uncover.
Do they seem to fear death?
Contemplate.
Does Mellon's ghost walk, povertied at last,
walking in furrows of corn, still sowing,
do apparitions come?
Voyage.
Think of your gardens. But here is corn to keep.
Marked pointed sticks to name the crop beneath.
Sowing is over, harvest is coming ripe.
—No, sir; they want to go on.
They want to live as long as they can.

MURIEL RUKEYSER.

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Madrid to Manhattan

By Hyde Partnow

A FEW HOURS before Hilda's pains came we were seeing Chris off.

The night had dawned into good-by. We were standing on the cracked sidewalk. Chris had the mandolin and guitar strapped around his shoulders and the big cracked suitcase in his tough fist. His stocky wife, Sylvia, was next to him in her nurse's cape. A warm wind was sketching Hilda's belly as she leaned against me.

"So long, Chris," I said.

"Salud," he said. "Remember, Hilda. You two can have this kid for yourselves and no worry. Me fighting over in Spain and you over here having your baby like you want to. It goes together. I'm just sorry we couldn't see it before we got away."

"Why not wait then?" asked Hilda.

"We can't now. Anyway, something comes over you and you can't wait. You've got to do something." He planted his suitcase on the sidewalk. "That's why I ripped the swastika off the *Bremen*. That's why, when pals of mine were kicked out of their homes, I used to come over and put back their furniture. That's why, when some stiffs weren't getting regular eats, I'd chain myself to an elevator post and yell my head off."

"Really Chris, we need more of your kind," I said.

He grinned. "Then somebody's got to make more. Like you and Hilda. I'm glad it's you two who are doing it." He became bashful and clumsy. "I never saw a pair like you. You're matched. Like two birds. Sylvia and me are matched pretty good too. But it's different with us. I don't know, we're always living from hand to mouth. I'm too hot-headed, I guess, and she can't hold her tongue on a job. But if we could do it, we'd throw up babies all right, too. We'd say to those bastards over there, you can't wipe us out. Try and stop us. No matter how many of us you knock over, we'll have more coming." He picked up the big suitcase. "So if they knock me over . . ."

"They won't, Chris."

He grinned. "I'm not wearing a bullet-proof vest, am I, Vincent? What if they do knock me over? It won't matter much. I'll know you're putting up somebody else over here to take my place." He started off. Sylvia was still talking to Hilda.

I said, "Can't I see you off at the pier, Chris?"

"Oh, no."

"Why not?"

"You might get us in trouble. They don't want our people to go to Spain. You know, we're neutral. We've got to sneak off, see? Well, good luck." He waved his free hand. Sylvia kissed Hilda in a hurry and caught up with Chris.

We watched them go down the street. The street lamps were still on, but daylight was coming on. The two of them were solid and of the same height. Sylvia with the bundles and cape—Chris with his suitcase, guitar, mandolin, his big feet. As they turned the corner, neither of them looked around.

Our house felt empty when we went back to it. We went to bed and talked quietly until sleep took us. The baby was getting ready for the big push and we were waiting for it calmly.

Toward morning it looked as if I were right. Nothing would help. The ergot and strychnine and castor oil were sickening slop.

"What will you do now?" I asked Hilda.

The steam-heat was down. The bedroom was cold and dull.

"I don't know," said Hilda. "Something. I must do something."

"You can't," I said. "What could you do? Nothing can help now."

She did not answer at once. Then she said roughly, "I'll get them to clean it out of me."

I said, "Hilda, you won't."

"I must," she said wildly. "It's no use. There's no way out. This time it's all going under. I can't do it. I won't."

The war in Madrid was weighing down both of us.

"Don't you want a baby, Hilda?"

"A baby with a number on its chest? Flies walking on its cheeks? No. No. No."

I could see photos of murdered babies stuck to her eyes.

That was in November. We argued birth or abortion for weeks afterward. Meanwhile we watched newspaper headlines. HITLER AND MUSSOLINI BACK FRANCO. REBELS ENTER MADRID. AIR RAIDS STIFFEN MORALE OF LOYALISTS.

Hilda made an appointment with the abortionist.

I was in agony. I argued. Her answer every day was no. "As long as one gun exists, Vincent, I'm not going to have a baby."

"But this war is different."

"How?"

"It's a war so the rest of us can have babies. We've got to believe in them over there."

During Christmas the headlines changed. REBELS ROUTED FROM UNIVERSITY CITY. DRIVE CRUSHED. *She postponed her appointment.*

New Year's Day she said, "I don't know, Vincent. I still see myself having a baby in a blown-up dugout. What shall I do?"

"We've got to have the courage to reproduce ourselves," I said.

She was silent. Next day I said, "Well, Hilda?"

I could see she was cornered. "After all, you're healthy. I'm working. We're married."

The day before her appointment with the abortion-

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ist, she said: "All right, Vincent. I'll run up the white flag." We kissed.

In the months that followed Málaga and Guadalajara and Almería and Guernica and Bilbao were no longer headlines, no longer just newspaper print but organic impulses that went into our flesh and stayed there like wounds or rewards. Madrid to Manhattan was one lifeline. HANDS OFF SPAIN *meant* HANDS OFF OUR BABY *to us.*

Now July was here, and the big drive of the loyalists to break the siege of Madrid had started, and our baby was coming.

My eyes opened and I knew she was awake. I turned around. Hilda was lying on her back, her eyes open.

"Aren't you sleeping?" I said. "What's the matter?"

"I'm sorry I woke you, darling."

"What's the matter?"

"I think the pains are here. Take out your watch."

I took out the wrist-watch from under my pillow. It was only seven.

When a spasm came over her face, I looked at my watch. It was 7:10. Her eyes were serious, but I knew it was a relief for it to come. We were both smiling.

"I'm glad it came on a Sunday while you're home," she said.

Another spasm came into her face while she was talking. It was then 7:22. We smiled some more and I held her hand this time. At 7:34 another spasm came along.

Hilda said, "This must be it."

"We'll wait once more."

Her bag was on the table by our bed. There was everything in it. Hilda had packed it three weeks back. There were the nightgowns and bed jackets she had made, and some toilet articles.

At a quarter of eight it came again. "All right," I said. I got out of bed. "I'll call the doctor." I dressed.

She got out too and took off her nightgown. There were spots on her belly and a big brown line down the middle of it. I helped her on with her shoes so she would not have to bend.

Then I rushed out to phone and rushed back. It was hot in the street.

"The doctor said for us to pack and go over," I told her. "He said we can take our time. There's no hurry."

I shaved and dressed and then we ate breakfast slowly.

Hilda was calm and I kept timing her pains all along. They were coming every ten minutes when we left the house. That was about ten o'clock.

We walked to the hospital. We were both tall, only she was huskier, and it was pleasant to walk with her. The streets were quiet. Everybody was indoors or away. There were no crowds and no trucks and no peddlers and the stores were shut.

We walked along slowly. The hospital was near a park and we could see it between the trees from a long way off. Once Hilda stopped short in the park. She was having a pain. I put my arm around her and she looked at me with her bold eyes. She had had her black hair laundered and the sun was on it.

"Why are pregnant women so damned beautiful?" I said.

She kissed me. We were happy and neither of us was nervous.

At the hospital reception desk a nurse was reading a paper. I said, "Good morning."

She put her paper aside and got up.

"Good morning," she said. "What is your name please?"

I told her. She got Hilda's card out of the files.

"Is it your first?" asked the nurse.

"Yes."

"You aren't scared, are you?"

"No."

"You don't look scared."

Hilda was looking at the headlines of the paper on the desk. REBELS ROUTED AT BRUNETE.

An orderly took Hilda's bag from me. We faced each other in the little white office. I patted her shoulder.

"So long," I said.

She smiled. "I'll try very hard, Vincent."

I watched her follow the nurse to the elevator. It was the first time we had been apart for the nine months. She looked slender from the back and her long legs were shapely and unswollen. She had never had a hard time really. It was going to be easy. I had this unbreakable feeling that it was going to be easy for her.

I waited in the office awhile, then went into the waiting room. Two other men were there. One was reading and wagging his foot. The other was snoring. I sat in a leather chair under the electric fan. The nurse came in.

"Your wife is in the labor room," she said. "There won't be news for some time. I suggest you take a walk or go to the movies."

I went outside. There were kids tearing around in

If I Was Not a Soldier

If I wasn't a soldier, a soldier said,
What would I be?—I wouldn't be,
It's hardly likely it seems to me,
A money lord or armament maker,
Territorial magnate or business chief.
I'd probably be just a working man,
The slave of a licensed thief—
One of the criminals I'm shielding now!

If I wasn't a soldier, a soldier said,
I'd be down and out as likely as not
And suffering the horrible starving lot
Of hundreds of thousands of my kind,
And that would make me a Red as well
Till I rose with the rest and was batoned or shot
By some cowardly brute—such as I am now!

HUGH MACDIARMID.

★

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swim-suits searching for a puddle. There were housewives with wet cloths around their heads at the open windows. There were men in shirt-sleeves playing cards on the shady side of the streets. I might have relaxed too, but I kept thinking how for Hilda there was no escaping the heat. I walked.

When I got back to the hospital I asked quietly: "How is my wife?"

The nurse at the switchboard said, "Mrs. Paul is doing nicely."

"Thank you," I said. "Is my doctor in?"

"Not now. He'll be back at five though."

I had lunch in an air-cooled cafeteria, then went to the park. I put on my sun-glasses and sat under a maple and read the Sunday paper. Next to me a lady in a print dress was rocking her baby. Herbert L. Matthews was writing about Brunete. About the Americans under fire. How hot it was for them under the Spanish sun, fighting. It was hard to read. My heart kept jumping. I got up. The sun had dropped and was shining on the face of the hospital. Before going in, I examined all the windows. . . . Behind one of them was Hilda.

Inside there was a light over the switchboard.

I asked, "How is my wife?"

The nurse said, "Mrs. Paul is doing nicely."

I said, "What do you mean?"

"Your wife's doing nicely."

"Nothing more than that?"

"I'm sorry, sir. She's doing nicely."

"Let me talk to the doctor."

"One moment, sir. I'll call the labor room."

He came down smiling. We shook hands. A stethoscope bulged in his pocket.

"How is she doing?" I asked.

"How are you doing?"

"Never mind," I said. "How is she?"

"She's doing nicely."

"Tell me what's wrong."

"Nothing's wrong."

"The hell with your rules. Tell me what's . . ."

"Easy, young feller," he said, still smiling. "We're waiting for your wife to get real sick but she's taking her time."

"How are the pains?"

"They're coming every five minutes."

"Is it going easy?"

"Yes. She's sitting in a wicker chair reading a magazine. It's sunny and she's all right."

I was under control again. "I knew it," I said. "It was easy while she was carrying it too."

"Of course," said the doctor. "She'll come through all right."

"I know she will."

"Why don't you go out and get yourself a drink somewhere?"

"I don't drink."

"There won't be any news before twelve. That's a long time."

I decided to go home and lie down. I tuned in on Spain over the short-wave. Except for the radio light I kept the room dark.

"Hello. Hello. This is Madrid calling. Station EAQ. The voice of Spain." The speaker appealed to the democracies of the world to help drive Germany and Italy out of the infant Spanish republic.

I could not lie down or sit down or stand up or walk. I went down again. All the corners were packed with men waiting for a breeze. All the doorways were crowded with ladies with babies in their arms taking the air long after bedtime.

Soon Hilda would be relaxing too. The baby would be out of her, it would all be over, we would sit up and talk, and I would rush a letter to Chris.

I looked around for a florist, but they were all closed. I went down to a subway station. I bought some gardenias and a bunch of yellow roses from the flower-vendor there. Then I walked to the hospital.

The doors were locked. I rang the night bell.

"I'm Mr. Paul," I said to the nurse who let me in.

"Yes, sir," she said.

I was pushing down hard on myself. "Is my wife . . . ?"

"Your wife is still the same, sir. Your doctor left word that there'll be nothing tonight."

My hands got cold and a cold dizziness went over me. There was one wooden bench in the hall under one dull light. I sat down.

I said, "Is my wife up?"

"Yes, sir," I heard her say. I was staring at the EXIT door. Behind it were the steps up to Hilda. Rush up! Then: control.

I got myself up. "I brought my wife these flowers. Would you give them to her, please?" The nurse took the green package out of my hands. I got myself out.

At home the bedclothes stuck to my skin. My pores were clogged. After a warm shower I could not sleep. It was three o'clock. I dressed and walked to the park.

People were sleeping in their street-clothes all over

★

Out of the Ivory Tower

Rooms are sarcophagi where walls
Of granite and sharp empty halls
Bark the breathy whispers back,
Repulsing all our timid clack,
Teaching the dead his place of shade
And silence, and benumbed charade.

In vain we chafe the mortuary seal,
Despair is acid rust we feel
Abrasive to each finger wound
Around the keys and knobs. And round
Black bars the casement bands, and brick
Each pane—square and cemented thick.

Then suddenly the gates groan full.
Like archæologists we pull
Open from outside, we shout
Our find, we take the mummy out,
And wonder, without talking, how
The lips and eyes are human now!

JOHN W. GASSNER.

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the park. Some had their own cots and others were sleeping on the benches or on blankets on the grass. A lot of them were married and slept together. They all looked exhausted. Beside some of them baby carriages were standing. One baby was crying.

I lay down next to a group of men over near the railing. The grass was patchy there and most of it was gravel. I spread a newspaper. Putting my hands under my head, I looked up through the maple trees overhead to a row of lights in the big hospital.

What were they doing to Hilda there, what was it like? She knew. From now on Hilda would know everything. Like these people here. Was there anything they didn't know, these women? They had all gone through it. These men, too. They had waited for it until it was over and now they were waiting for something else. They always waited. For the heat, for the cold, for their dinner, for health, for sleep. Some of them had begun waiting the minute they were born. They were trained for the waiting. They were trained for everything except the big troubles. The wars and the dying and being born and for nothing in the belly. Yet, when the big troubles came they got through them all right. And afterwards they grinned and got hard in the softer places. All over this American earth they were getting hard. All over the Spanish earth they were hard already. . . . Sixteen hours of labor. . . . But it would come out all right. I had placed my faith in it. Tie up with people like these and it would all come out right. Nothing would get us. Nothing would get Hilda. They might cut her and hack at her but they wouldn't get her. They wouldn't get any of us. . . . They wouldn't choke us. . . . They weren't choking us in the mouth and they wouldn't choke us where it was meant for more of us to come out of. . . . It was hard, that's all. Everything came hard today. Think of Madrid. Bombs. Babies. Beds. Bombed in babies. Hitler in bed with the lights on. Babies dead. . . . But not Hilda. Not us. Not any of us. They couldn't get you. . . . Like the heat. If you knew what to do about it, it wouldn't get you. No. As long as you knew what to do and had people behind you nothing would get you. . . .

I got myself up as soon as it was light. My back was stiff. People all around me were getting up too and brushing their wrinkled clothes. It was going to be hot again. I could see that.

As soon as the hospital doors opened I went inside.

The nurse at the switchboard told me, "Your wife is still the same."

She offered me a morning paper and I went into the waiting room. I sat under the fan reading. Herbert L. Matthews was saying that the Spaniards had commemorated the first year of their resistance to fascism with a great battle. Twenty-three planes had been downed. Tonight at Madison Square Garden, another article said, there was going to be a big celebration in honor of the loyalists.

I washed my face in the bathroom and wet my hair. I had no comb and I brushed it back with my fingers. The nurse told me again that Hilda was still the same. About ten o'clock my doctor came into the waiting room.

"How's my wife?"

He said, "Why didn't you shave?"

"How's my wife?"

"The dilatation is better. She's three fingers open. But the pains are lazy."

I said, "Doctor, I can't understand it. I can't. I can't get it."

"You don't have to," he said. "Go home and shave."

"I can't."

"Well, walk around."

"I can't do that either."

"You should have gone to work today."

I said, "Can I phone my wife?"

He hesitated. Then he went to the nurse at the switchboard.

"Will you connect Mr. Paul with the labor room?" Then, to me: "Go into that room over there."

I went in and closed the door. My heart was going like a telegraph key. I lifted the receiver from the hook.

"Go ahead," I heard the nurse say. I said, "Hello."

"Hello, dear." Hilda was making her voice jolly.

I said, "It was lonely without you. The house."

She did not answer.

"Did you sleep, dear?" I asked her.

She said, "O, yes. I had a real eight-hour sleep, darling. I'm feeling good."

"That's good," I said. "Did you eat too?" She said yes.

Then she said, "Darling, I'm trying awfully hard."

"Yes?"

"It's like pushing a telephone pole out of you. But it won't come out."

"It'll come out," I said. "And afterward we'll make you president of the Labor Party."

She laughed weakly. Then she said, "Do you hear it, dear?" I asked, "What?" She said, "The women here. They do scream."

"But you don't, do you?"

The answer was too long in coming. I said, "Hello." Then again: "Hello." Then it came: "No, darling, not me." Weak.

"Hold the fort," I said. "The Spanish bullthrowers won another one today."

"That's fine."

"Did you get my flowers?"

"Yes." Pause. "They were lovely." Pause. "I cried a little."

"Good-by, dear," I said. After she hung up I held onto the receiver and listened to the empty hum. When I came out the doctor was no longer there. I went into the street.

I kept phoning the hospital every half hour from wherever I happened to be. The answer was the same. "She's doing nicely." I was getting to touching things to prove they were really there. At five I phoned the doctor.

"Meet me right away at the hospital," he said.

I rushed over, sweat coming out all over me. I found him in the waiting room.

"That's a plucky kid you've got up there," he said as I came in.

"What's wrong?" I asked.

"She's getting very tired."

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"Oh," I said.

"The pains are too slow and they are wearing her out now."

"Oh," I said. I could not say any more.

"We're giving her something to hurry them up." He snapped his fingers several times fast. "They should be coming like that."

"Why the hell did you wait so long?" I shouted.

"Take it easy," he said. He cupped his palms. "Here's the womb," he said. "The walls squeeze down like this. Several kinds of muscle put forty pounds of pressure down on that baby. It drives them out usually. But this case is different. Something's holding it back. Instead of coming down as it should, it's staying up there—like that." He went on talking. But I had heard enough. *Something's holding it back.*

"If somebody else must be called in, I'll do it of course," I heard him saying. "Come back around eight."

I walked around a path in the park through the unemployed crowds. Why did I let her do it? It was my fault. When she said she wanted it cleaned out of her, why didn't I listen to her? Now Hilda was getting tired, tired, tired, and the confidence quitting her—the baby getting blocked. As if, yes, Hitler and Mussolini were at her womb, holding up the entrance with their cannon and saying *you can't.* You can't come out. We don't want any more like you out here to fight us. . . . And me thinking the Spaniards were making it all right for her. That the Duce and Führer would never be able to get to it with the Spaniards stopping them. And all the time there were the Spaniards getting the same thing. . . . I must have been dizzy all right. . . . With thousands of them dropped off roofs and peddled on the streets and abandoned in alleys and bombed in their cribs before they were old enough to have measles. . . .

I walked over to the hospital. There were kids in a round fountain kicking up the water.

"Mrs. Paul is still in the labor room," said the nurse.

In the waiting room I looked out the window over the park where the moon was rising. It was red like a sun, and heavy.

The doctor came in in his shirtsleeves. He looked tired this time. "I got somebody else in," he said. "The biggest in the field. There ought to be news for you tonight. Your wife's trying very hard and she's helping a lot. I've been feeling for the baby's heart and it's all right."

I said, "Can't I help?"

"One patient is all we can handle right now."

"When shall I come back?"

"Not before twelve."

"All right," I said. I turned away. He called me back. "Listen," he said, "you've got to be brave about this. She's getting the best we can give her."

"Yes?" I said.

"We're waiting for a normal delivery. But if it becomes necessary we will use the high forceps. Or . . ."

"Yes? All right," I said.

The streets were blurred. I found myself outside Madison Square Garden looking at a stripe of electric-lit letters across the marquee. ONE YEAR OF WAR IN SPAIN. I could feel my feet shoving through torn and dirty leaflets on the sidewalks. More leaflets were pushed into my hands by figures on the corners. As my feet climbed the stairs to the top balcony I got to thinking, *they're writing a leaflet out of my wife's tissues tonight.* I entered a doorway. From the roof down to the floor people were humming. Searchlights from overhead lighted everybody up. I sat myself down. My eyes dropped down the cliffs of the balconies below me. Blur of summer colors—reds, yellows, greens. Long streamers with sharp letters: FIGHT WAR AND FASCISM. TOWARD A DEMOCRATIC WORLD. The stage was lit and speakers moved onto it and sat down. Then a figure came up before the microphone, and the hum came down and a solo voice came up. I stared at the cluster of big horns. The hands of the people banged together.

The voice kept saying, "I must ask you to shorten your applause, my dear friends. I must ask you to shorten your speeches, dear speakers. There is no time. There is so little time. I must ask you . . ."

But the speeches and applause came on, tide on tide. The white hands banging, the people's mouths pleading. And the Garden from roof to floor loud with encouragement.

Mr. Chairman, I found myself begging, *add my wife to this program. Let the sounds of her pain come over these horns from the labor room. Let her screams mix with the sounds of the pain in Spain and go sounding through this Garden.*

The white hands banged together.

I want this applause to be broadcast to my wife in the labor room. She needs encouragement tonight. Please help her, Mr. Chairman.

I kept looking at the cluster of horns until they became mouths. Until the mouths became the mouths of the wounded in Spain with the blood in their throats, became the opened mouths of the fallen, saying to me, *Tell her to go ahead with the baby. Tell her no faltering. Tell her there will never be bombs in her baby's crib. Tell her there will be the singing of lullabies, not dirges. Tell her to go ahead and have as many babies as she wants. We over here are making it safe for the*

Surburbia

Beyond the umbrella tree on the lawn,
Beyond the commuters' train at eight,
The console radio and Monday bridge,
And the Republican editorial:
Beyond the quarterly dividend check:
Beyond the lecture on rock gardening,
The game of golf on Sunday afternoon
And the immoderate passion for hooked rugs:

Look up beyond the stuccoed suburb sky
And see, one day, all roads ahead cut off:
The clubhouse dark, and gleam of bayonets
Along the tennis court: behold the world
An Indian skull turned up on a fairway—
The world kicked crumbling in the trampled drive.

IRENE HENDRY.

★

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babies for a long time to come. Some day, tell her, the babies will come out laughing.

Someone then made an appeal for money and the pledges came in. I could hear them coming in from all sides, there was no stopping them. I got out a piece of leaflet and wrote down on the back, *Tonight I pledge to the democratic people of the world one infant.*

Then I was walking out with the thousands of others. The streets were bulging with us tonight. There were a lot of us. And we'd multiply. We were multiplying. . . . I rushed to a phone booth.

"Mrs. Paul is still in the labor room. I'm sorry, sir. Will you call again?"

I leaned against the tin wall of the booth staring at the mouthpiece. Shiny dark whirlpool into that my voice and all dropping. . . .

I phoned again. The ring of the coin and the hum. Ring . . . ring. . . .

"Your wife is still in the labor room. Will you call again?"

The ring of the coin and the hum and . . . ring . . . ring. . . .

"Your wife is still in the labor room."

Ring of the coin and the hum and . . . ring . . . ring. . . .

"Your wife is still in the labor room."

Please, Hilda, please—don't get tired now.

Ring of the coin and the hum and . . . ring . . . ring. . . .

"Your wife is still in the labor room."

Please let her have morphine, cocaine, please, caffeine, procaine.

Ring of the coin and the hum and . . . ring . . . ring. . . .

"Your wife is still in the labor room."

Thirty-nine hours. *Pain from Madrid to Manhattan.*

Ring of the coin and the hum and . . . ring . . . ring. . . .

"Please is my wife in the labor room?"

"No, sir."

Please, please, please.

"Mrs. Paul is in the delivery room now, sir. She was just wheeled in."

The muscles of my heart were cracking. I hung up. I talked to the mouthpiece of the phone. Help, help. Everyone that's brave and clean come help my wife. Everyone who ever marched with me and picketed with me and fought against the guff with me come help her now. This baby is dedicated to democracy. Get it to live. You who were hanged, starved, sweated, gassed, jailed, cheated by the lira, the mark, the peseta, the yen, help her come through. Everything you can do you must do now, now. . . .

I lifted the phone. I dropped the coin. I dialed. I dialed. I dialed. I dialed. I dialed. . . . Then ring . . . ring . . . ring . . . ri . . .

"Hello. This is the New York Maternity Hospital. Good morning."

"I'm Mr. Paul. I . . ."

Please, please, please, please, please.

"Mrs. Paul gave birth to a baby girl at 2:05, sir. She weighs seven pounds ten ounces. Mother and baby are well."

"Thank you," I said.

"You're welcome, sir. Goo——"

"Hold on," I said. "I want to thank you. I mean I want to thank. I mean thank. I want . . ."

"Yes, sir. One moment. The doctor would like to talk to you!"

"Doctor," I said, "how is she?"

"She? Which one?" asked the doctor.

"Hah, hah, hah, hah, hah, hah, hah."

"You sound happy."

I said, "I mean how are *they?*"

"The baby's the image of your wife."

"That's good. How is my wife?"

"She's tired."

"I'll be right over."

"No, you won't, young feller. She doesn't want you or anybody else right now. She's sleeping." The doctor chuckled. "Come around tomorrow."

"When?"

"About seven—if you're up that early. And now, young feller, let me go home. I'm all in. One more thing, though. I don't know what you've got to thank. But you better thank something."

I said seriously, "I will."

I went into the street. There was a small breeze on my face and the moon was bright. I gulped a lot of water from one of the public park fountains. Then I began walking along the empty blocks where the people lived whom I had to thank. The blocks were dark and the houses were plain or rotting. But here they lived—the men and women who quarreled about rent and food. The kids who hollered . . . the intellectuals who dreamt . . . the rooming-house out-of-work home-relief people who waited . . . the workers on drawn-out picket lines who slept between strikes. I walked from house to house and thanked them all.

It was day when I got home. I showered, shaved, got into a pressed suit, and by six I was out.

The sun was on top of the trees in the park near the hospital. The sparrows were cheeping.

As I came in, the nurse at the switchboard was putting out the light.

"Good morning," I called out loudly.

"Good morning, Mr. Paul." She smiled. "You can go right up."

I shoved open the EXIT door with my foot.

In the peaceful corridor upstairs I passed the private rooms—white walls, flowers, mothers in lacy clothes, white beds, sunlight. When I came to my wife's ward I did not halt. I rushed in. She looked up. I got past a blur of beds. She lifted her head. It dropped back on the pillow. Then I was kissing her.

Fumes of ether rose out of her bed and covered our kiss.

I let go and sat down. I sat as close to the bed as I could.

We looked at one another in a new way.

Then we asked one another quiet questions.

"How do you feel, darling?"

"Sleepy."

"Sleep," I said.

"I can't. . . . Are you sorry it's a girl?"

"No. Why?"

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"I thought maybe you wanted a fighter. You know. Like Chris.

"Girls can fight pretty good."

"Thank you, darling. . . . Did you write to Chris?"

"Not yet. . . . Did the baby cry much . . . ?"

"I don't remember. I just knew it was all over. Then I slept."

"We'll make a clean place for her won't we, girl?" I said.

She nodded.

"Go ahead. Sleep." I said.

She tried to make a turn. Her eyes shut. Sweat came out on her face.

I jumped up. "What is it?" I asked.

"Nothing. The ether's gone off."

A nurse came in. She helped Hilda. Then she asked would I see the baby. I looked at Hilda. She nodded.

I followed the nurse into the elevator and up to the white nursery. She pointed out my daughter and left.

I looked at her.

The basket she was lying in was like the hundred others. She was bound in pink to the shoulders. Only her face showed. Not a sound or a motion came out. Like her mother, she seemed to be resting after a great shock.

Her head was ugly and blue and her face was grey.

On each cheek was the brand where the forceps had stabbed her.

Marks of labor. Violence. But life.

Contributors

MICHAEL GOLD, who has been an editor of the NEW MASSES for many years, conducts a column in the *Daily Worker* entitled "Change the World."

LEANE ZUGSMITH is the author of *A Time to Remember* and *Home Is Where You Hang Your Childhood.* She is at present completing her new novel.

GRANVILLE HICKS has recently finished the editing of Lincoln Steffens's letters together with Ella Winter, and is now at work on a study of modern English literature.

HORACE GREGORY is at work on *Makers and Ancestors,* a collection of critical essays showing the traditions now alive in contemporary literature. The book will be published shortly by Covici-Friede.

SAMUEL PUTNAM edits the Brazilian section of the *Handbook of Latin American Studies,* issued yearly by the Harvard University Press.

MURIEL RUKEYSER is the author of a volume of poems called *U. S. No. 1,* which Covici-Friede is releasing on December 12.

HYDE PARTNOW tells us that he has in turn been a playwright, actor, editor, and musician, and that he has traveled extensively through America, Europe, and the Near East, and seen fascism at first hand.

HUGH MACDIARMID'S poem on page 18 is from *Second Hymn to Lenin and Other Poems,* published in London by Stanley Nott. A volume of Macdiarmid's selected poems, edited by Horace Gregory, will be published here shortly under the Covici-Friede imprint.

JOHN W. GASSNER is in charge of the play-reading department of the Theatre Guild. He teaches drama at Hunter College and the New Theatre School, and is co-editor, with Burns Mantle, of *A Treasury of the Theatre.* He recently joined the editorial board of *Theatre Workshop.*

IRENE HENDRY is a student at the Washington Square College of New York University.

A PROGRESSIVE'S HOME LIBRARY

Books That Make History

Here is a list of books every progressive in America needs because they go to the root of the major questions facing this country today. Books not included in the list of the New York *Times,* they dig deep below the surface and get down to the causes.

MARX: **"Capital," Vols. I, II, III**
MARX: **"Selected Works," Vols. I & II**
MARX and ENGELS: **"Civil War in the U. S."**
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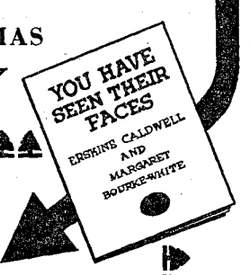

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